AARDVARK-VANAHEIM/WIN-MILL PRODUCTIONS
NEW DAVE SIM COMIC • BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH • CEREBUS DREAMS
FOLLOWING
CEREBUS
#10
$3.95

Here's Dave Sim's comp sent to Barry Windsor-Smith as a suggestion for Barry's *Swords of Cerebus* cover. Barry writes, "I didn't use Dave's suggestion, but I really liked his pencil and marker sketch. I had it framed years ago, and it is hanging on my office wall just five feet away as I write this. One of several charming things about this sketch is Dave's notation at the bottom. I knew what Dave meant, of course, but I've always been amused at the unintended double entendre of 'Go Nuts!' It reads like a climactic insult, 'You! Go NUTS!' Also a long term prediction about my mental health, 'Barry, go nuts.' Following with 'Y'r Friend Dave,' it's almost an invitation: 'Barry, if you go nuts, I'll go nuts too. Y'r Friend Dave.'"

(continued on page 35)

Following Cerebus

Vol. 1 #10 June 2007

Following Cerebus **produced by**

Craig Miller & Dave Sim

John Thorne, creative consultant

Cerebus **comic book by**

Dave Sim & Gerhard

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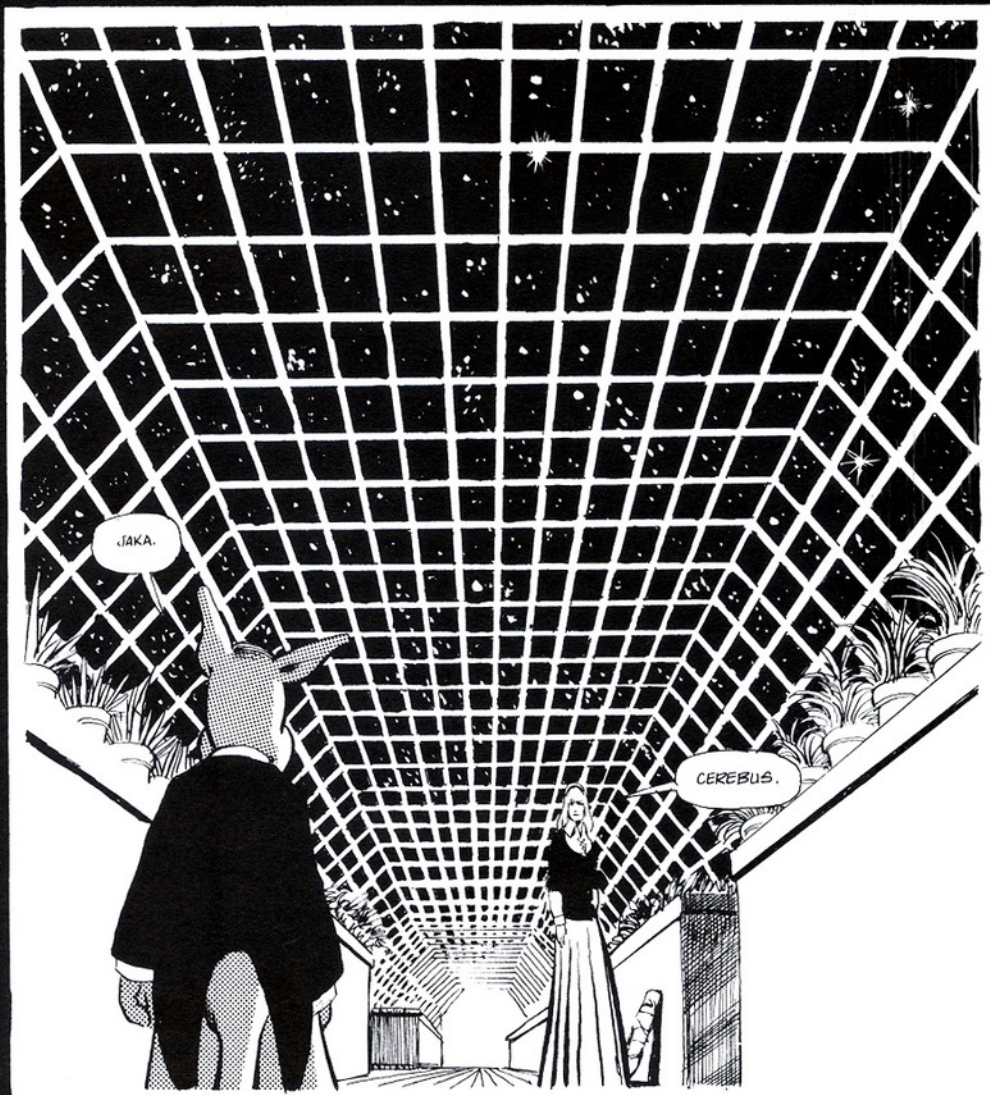
An Early Masterpiece

"The Night Before" (i.e. *Cerebus* 36)—the subject of this issue's cover illustration—is a milestone in the *Cerebus* epic. A good argument could be made that it is the finest of the early chapters, or at least the finest "dramatic" chapter (i.e. in which humor is not a dominant element). Even now, with the entire storyline complete, it stands out. It ranks alongside other dramatic high points—say, the conclusion of *Jaka's Story*, the conclusion of *Form & Void*, and the retelling of the death of Jerome Howard in *Latter Days*—as superior moments. If it is not the very best chapter, at the very least it deserves special recognition because Sim was just twenty-six years old when he wrote it.

Cerebus tries to impress Jaka.

Upon the story's original appearance in 1982, it was somewhat of an odd duck, even by the standards of *Cerebus*. Granted the series itself was distinct from other comics in numerous ways—the "funny animal" lead character, the madcap humor, the dead-on parodies, the mutual independence of the cartoonist and his wife/publisher, and much more. By the time the *High Society* storyline rolled around, the manic action of the early issues had been replaced with the slower pace of political intrigue (though the biting satire remained), and some fans began grumbling for a return to the Cerebus the Barbarian days. When Sim announced that the *High Society* storyline would last twenty-five issues (a mere blip in retrospect), readers settled in for a long wait until the "good stuff" would return.

Then, a third of the way into *High Society* comes "The Night Before." The return of Jaka thrilled some fans, to be sure, but the story itself seemed to consist of nothing more than two characters standing around talking. No "action" scenes, no slapstick humor, no sly winks at the audience with parody characters. Just two characters. Standing around. Talking.

In a recent episode of *House M.D.,* possibly the best-written network drama nowadays, one of the characters says something to the effect, "Life is just a series of rooms, and the people that you meet in those rooms." In "The Night Before," Cerebus and Jaka meet in a room at the Regency hotel. With the aid of Lord Julius and Astoria, Cerebus has been moving his way up the political and social ladder of Iestan politics. The night before Petuniacon, where Cerebus will lobby for votes to remain the ranking diplomatic representative, Jaka (in her profession as tavern dancer, very much at the "other end" of the social ladder) pays an unexpected visit in order to deliver a surprise gift she recently picked up from a salvage merchant from Beduin.

That is the entire "plot," but Sim understood that a compelling story need not have lots of comic book-ish action. "The Night Before" is a character study propelled through fine storytelling and even better dialogue.

The splash page is interesting in that the only two characters are dwarfed by their environment—a narrow greenhouse-like room lined with potted plants. The starry nighttime sky dominates the image area, reinforcing the apparent insignificance of the individuals. (It brings to mind the famous line from *Casablanca:* "The problems of [two] little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.")

Beginning with the second page, Jaka and Cerebus are center stage, but it's obvious from both the dialogue and the expressions that they inhabit different worlds and are only temporarily occupying the same physical space. Jaka is clearly enam-

ored of Cerebus—how far the curious, simple swordsman has come since she last saw him. She gazes at him with longing and a hope that he has some feelings for her.

Cerebus, on the other hand, is completely self-absorbed, hardly noticing the woman he thinks he loves and supposedly longs for. On the second and third pages (210 and 211 in the *High Society* trade), he isn't even making eye contact with her, instead trying to impress her with his power and fortune (current and expected greater riches). On page 212—the fourth page of the story—he turns back to face her, but he's still obsessed with his own power: "Cerebus could beat up **anyone** in this hotel." It is indicative of his cluelessness that he thinks something like that is going to impress Jaka. But he must think it will impress her: he follows it with the statement, "Cerebus wants you to move in here with him."

Under different circumstances, this is what Jaka would love to hear, but Cerebus's offer is presented within the context of his own selfish interests—Astoria will continue to live with him (he needs her in order to get rich), and Jaka will need to "do some work" to avoid the appearance of being "a freeloader." Now Jaka is the one who cannot face Cerebus and tears up at Cerebus's callousness. Her dreams of a romantic reunion shattered, she presses him, endeavoring to discover the point of origin of his newly-evident insensitivity. "When did you remember about me. About us," she asks. (When they first met, Cerebus had been drugged. When the drug wore off, he initially remembered nothing of her. Jaka said, "Some day, sweet Cerebus, you **will** remember....")

Cerebus tells her that he saw her in his drunken dreams. So he did remember. Sim slows down the drama first by breaking up Cerebus's brief response into a series of small panels, then by following it with two "silent" panels before Cerebus calls out Jaka's name.

Jaka turns (perhaps hopefully?) at Cerebus's response to her question and, after he says her name, she replies with a simple "Yes?" Sim draws her in a

First things first: "Astoria is going to make Cerebus **wealthy**.*"*

This page: Cerebus "now" (in "The Night Before") and "then" (in "The Secret"). Jaka asks if Cerebus would still kill a yak for her supper—a reference to Cerebus's offer during their first meeting. Below: Cerebus talks about remembering Jaka, and her original promise after their first meeting. (Later, in Church & State*, p. 463, when Cerebus upraids Jaka for not waiting for him, she reminds him that she promised to wait for him to remember, not for him to come back: "Well you* **did** *remember, and you never* **came back***.")*

medium shot, so it's difficult to depict much facial expression, but body language suggests that she expects—or at least hopes for—a return of the old, romantic Cerebus. He responds with a joke—not a bad move, actually—but digs himself into a deep hole by accusing Jaka of seeking a handout. He thinks he's being kind, but Jaka is heartbroken. Cerebus's attempt at compassion now arises from the same arrogant attitude as his earlier offer invit-

driven by selfish, self-centered motives. But it also makes a point about the environment into which Cerebus has become comfortable—the world of politics. In a 1982 interview, Sim was asked about his interest in politics, and he said, "I am fascinated with [actual politics]. The process of electing somebody, the process of figuring out who's the right man, who's lying, who's the front man, who's pulling the strings. This has been going on for centuries." [Reprinted in *Cerebus Companion* 1, Dec. 1993, p. 14] Cerebus is treating Jaka as yet another political hack, angling for some advantage, seeking to advance her own agenda.

ing Jaka to move in with him. Jaka understands that Cerebus's mindset is such that he cannot fathom her non-mercenary reasons for visiting him.

Part of this is integral to Cerebus's character,

Jaka's surrender is perfectly captured in the first panel of page 222. She leans on the short wall for physical support, but it's symbolic of her emotional defeat. In his current condition, Cerebus simply cannot understand her love for him. As she talks about an investment she made (unbeknownst to Cerebus, an investment in him and in their relationship), he babbles on, lecturing her about scams. Jaka keeps her back turned to Cerebus. The beautifully-written and elegantly-precise dialogue works on two levels. In an obvious sense it describes Jaka's purchase of an antique from the salvage merchant:

Cerebus: "Bad investment?" Jaka: "I'm beginning to think so. Yes."

Left panel: emotional defeat represented visually

Cerebus: "And you trusted your instincts....You must feel pretty **foolish**." Jaka: "Yes."

The first-time reader doesn't know what the investment is at this point of the story, but it soon becomes apparent that Jaka's answers not only relate to that investment but, on a larger scale, to what the investment represents: her relationship with Cerebus. He has unknowingly described the reason for the breakdown of the relationship.

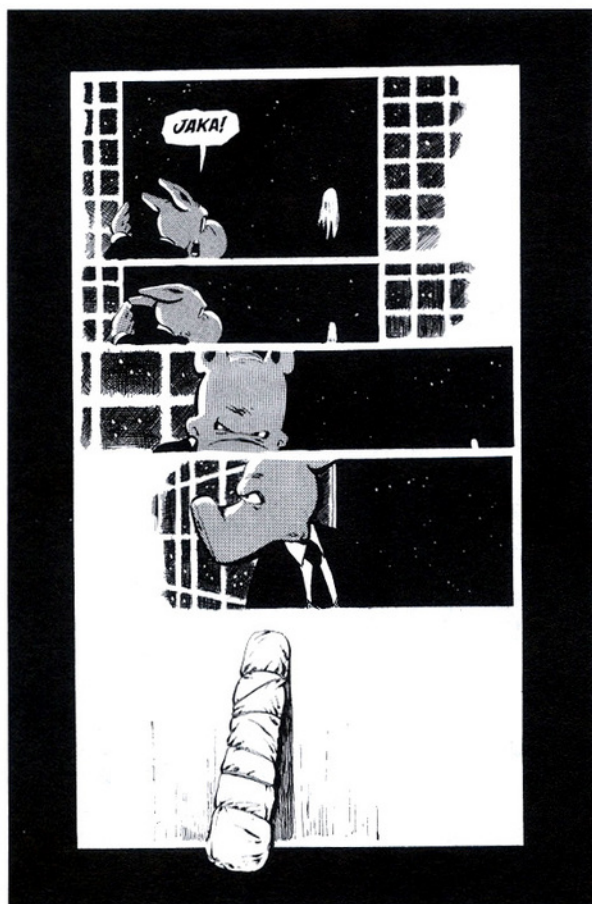
Jaka surprises him by suddenly telling him that she has to leave. Panicked, Cerebus does the only thing that can occur to him: he offers her money to tide her over. It's a scene that repeats itself in *Church and State:* after Cerebus learns that Jaka is not only married, but pregnant too, he offers her a bag of coins: "For you and the baby" (page 489). In both cases she refuses, first saying, "I've taken care of myself since I was twelve. I'll manage," followed by a simple "No" (*High Society*, p. 224-225), and later, "If I want money I can always get it from Uncle Julius. But I'm going to manage on my own" (*Church and State*, p. 489).

Then Jaka drops a bombshell: she came not to take anything from Cerebus, but to leave a gift for him. A package leans against the wall next to him—a package that Sim has drawn in many panels but has probably gone unnoticed by the reader because of the more interesting drama between Jaka and Cerebus. (Of course, Sim avoided drawing attention to the package by relying mostly on close-ups of the two characters.)

Jaka refuses Cerebus's offer of money twice.

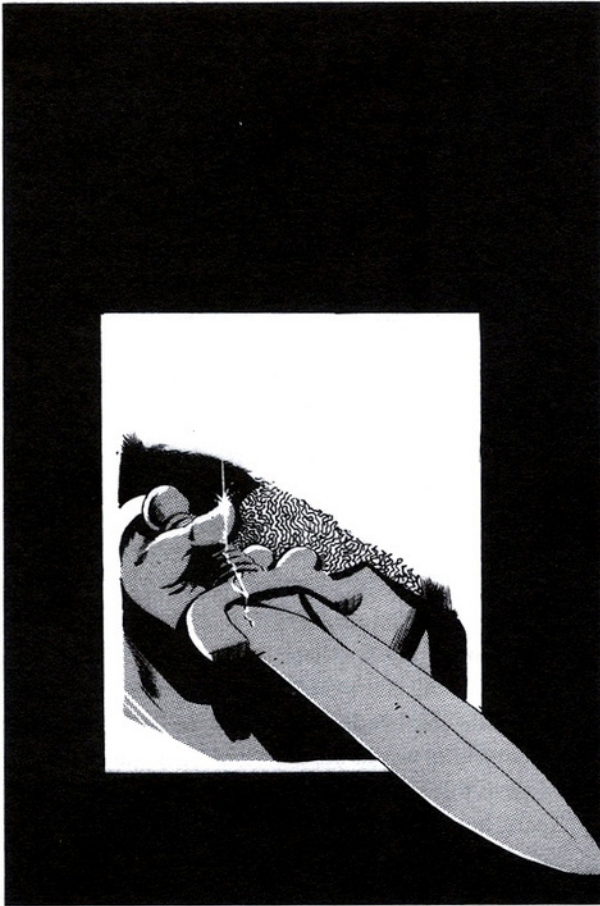
Then comes the kicker. In one of the best three-page sequences of the entire *Cerebus* epic, Cerebus watches Jaka walk off in the distance, then turn back toward the package, unwrap it, and find his old sword!

Interestingly, Cerebus makes no attempt to chase after Jaka as she walks away. He does not try to get her to change her mind or reconsider. Perhaps he understands the futility of such an attempt; perhaps he believes that the Petuniacon convention narrows his options; or perhaps—in another example of his self-centeredness—he is more interested in the package she brought for him than in negotiating a continued relationship with Jaka that would require some sort of sacrifice or compromise on his part.

In designing the three-page sequence, Sim uses a simple cinematic device of "zooming in" on the sword as it's being unwrapped. But he adds an in-

Above and at right: the story's dramatic conclusion

teresting twist for emphasis: on the first of the three pages, he breaks the border for the first time in the story. The package extends into the thick black border along the bottom panel. This "3-D" type effect has been used often in comics (in 1954, the American Comics Group—i.e. ACG—used the device for nine consecutive entire issues of *Adventures into the Unknown*, even down to the thick black panel borders) because it allows an artist to give a dramatic impact to one element of a panel. At this point of the story, when Cerebus is focused on the package, Sim wants to make sure the reader is focused on it as well. The effect is used even more dramatically on the final page's close-up of the unwrapped sword, which extends completely through the border, splitting it. The sword also comes directly at the reader.

Originally, longtime readers were thrilled: Cerebus the Barbarian has returned! They scrambled to their back issues to recall that, yes indeed, Cerebus had lost his sword back in Beduin while attempting to steal a stash of gold coins (issue 12, or page 271 of the *Cerebus* trade paperback). (Before she left, Jaka had told Cerebus that, according to the Beduin merchant, the sword "had been found with a large quantity of gold coins.") But of course, Cerebus the Barbarian would never

Harry Lazarus's "3D" effect in Adventures into the Unknown *55 (ACG; 1954)*

return—the reappearance of the sword allowed Sim to show how, despite appearances to Jaka and others, Cerebus hadn't adapted to his new environment all that well. The sword may have been a fine way for Cerebus to settle disputes during his days as a mercenary, a tax collector, and a gambler, but in the world of politics, both personal and governmental, it was virtually useless.

Sim presents this reality in the chapters that immediately follow "The Night Before" entitled "It's Showtime!" and then "Petuniacon Day Two." Sim parodies comic book conventions with deadly precision, but more to the point at hand, when Elrod begins to challenge Cerebus's popularity, the aardvark grabs his sword, marches over to the albino, and challenges him to a swordfight right there in the hotel. It takes Astoria's intervention to talk Cerebus out of it by convincing him that if he plays his cards right he could end up becoming prime minister. "Cerebus doesn't **want** to be prime minister! Cerebus wants to turn Elrod into albino cutlets!" he screams. But reason—or at least Astoria's manipulative manner—wins the day, and Cerebus puts away his sword.

"The Night Before" remains a remarkable achievement in Sim's career. While he would come to master additional storytelling techniques, and his proficiency at drawing would continue to improve (the Cerebus figures are fine, but it would be several years before Sim's ability at drawing women would catch up to his ability at drawing men; indeed, some of the Jaka faces are downright bizarre), this story, taken as a whole, has a visceral power that's unusual in comics. Sim later acknowledged getting praise for the story even from readers whose first exposure to Cerebus was issue 36—individuals who had no knowledge of the history of the characters. That, as much as anything, is a testament to the success of "The Night Before."

—Craig Miller

Cerebus challenges Elrod at Petuniacon.

Reply to Roberta Gregory

Introduction

Those with long memories will recall the Roberta Gregory *autobio strip in issue 8 of* Following Cerebus *which, unfortunately, appeared without only a brief explanation. I apologize for that. I think if I had realized that the inclusion of my original cover letter would have cleared up a lot of confusion, I would probably have included it with the piece itself. Anyway, here it is, two issues late:*

27 January 05

Dear Roberta:

Apologies for not writing earlier. Gerhard took the last issue of *Naughty Bits* home to be read and I didn't get it back for a while and by then I had this stack of mail to be answered and etc. etc. as you well know from personal experience. Anyway, I just wanted you to know how much I'm going to miss Bitchy Bitch's and your own adventures in comic book form. I always sat down and read it right away when it came in, figuring if you can't face the diametric opposite of your own viewpoints square on, that probably makes your own viewpoints suspect. And, of course, your work was never quite as "medicinal" as all that because of your narrative abilities and gentle wit and unfailing honesty. Sorry to hear that it ultimately became commercially unviable. Those of us with hard-edged opinions are always going to be facing that potential of the audience moving in different directions and the political climate shifting under our feet (to mix a metaphor).

The reason that I'm writing now is that my maternal grandmother died a while back and left me a sum of money which I've been actively dispersing in various (in my view) worthy directions. I can't say that it's entirely what I think she would have wanted me to do. In complete honesty I think her primary and nearly exclusive interest in me was as a vehicle for great-grandchildren (the year Deni and I got married she gave us Lynn Johnston's pre-*For Better or Worse* paperback *David, We're Pregnant!* which is the sort of subtle levels of advocacy on which she operated) and that nothing really showed up on her primary radar screen apart from that. It made conversation difficult because i knew she wasn't really interested in anything I was interested in. She was basically waiting to hear "Guess what, Grandma, I'm getting married." Followed by "Guess what, Grandma, (fill in the blank) is pregnant!" Discussing my research into the life of F. Scott Fitzgerald or the latest *Cerebus* trade paperback would have just been salt in the would and was pretty much empty of content for her even as it issued from my mouth. When I went to visit her in Florida in the late nineties, I hired a limousine and took her to see a production of *The King and I*, with Hayley Mills in the "I" role which she enjoyed. Her eyesight was terrible but her hearing was sharp, so good acoustics went a long was in the entertainment end of things. I gave three thousand dollars to Theatre & Company here in town to put her name on their Endowment Installation— "The Estate of Lily Ivy Reid" —because of that positive theatre experience. Is she looking on, pleased form the next world? As I say, I would doubt it. Her world was made up of procreation and nothing would have pleased her more than to have ten great-grandchildren and fifty great-great grandchildren when she died. My sister and my cousin—her only other procreative hopes— were disinclined to have children as well. My sister married in her late forties and her husband's daughter had a baby, so that was as close as she got to having the great grandchild of her dreams. The Endowments person at T&C, Alana Cook when I told her the name Lily Ivy Ried, said, "That's a pretty name." It certainly was. Her maiden name was Lily Ivy Gator and I always thought that was an apt description of her relationship with my grandfather— an attractive flower, then a clinging vine, then a devouring serpent.

I gave a chunk of money to the local food bank and another chunk of money to Tsunami Disaster Relief through the Red Cross. Would she have been pleased? Again, not as much as if she had had a great-grandchild through me.

Anyway, that brings me to the point of the enclosed money order. Given that I can't say with any authority what she would have wanted me to do with the money and given that I'd down to the last few thousand that needs to be dispersed, I thought that it would be worth sending some money to you to commission either a Roberta Gregory autobio strip or a Bitchy bitch strip about Dave Sim and/or *Cerebus* that would run in *Following Cerebus*. This is purely selfish on my part—an opportunity to see another

Bitchy Bitch strip or Roberta Gregory strip and to emphasize one of my ambitions with *Following Cerebus* to see it evolve into a publication which is a forum for a variety of ideas and ideologies across the political spectrum. What better way than to commission someone from the diametric opposite end of that spectrum? I really hope this interests you or, if it doesn't, that the money at least provides a sufficient incentive to overcome your disinterest. I'd like you to take your time and do as finished a piece of work as you're capable of. No deadline obviously. I won't even mention to Craig and John that I've done this, so you can surprise them with a finished piece (four or five pages?). You can send along a copy of this letter when the time comes. Maybe Bitchy Bitch reading a bunch of *Cerebus* back issues at her boyfriend's and becoming increasingly livid? It seems appropriate to me considering the unbridgeable chasm which has opened up between me and womenkind in general over the last decade or so. Since capitulation to feminism on my part is out of the question and the resulting chasm is so wide that a money order seems like the only thing small enough to get across there with a metaphorical harpoon gun, I thought I would give it, literally, a shot.

Grandma Reid represented—and will always represent—womankind to me in a lot of ways, the good, the bad, the ugly and the pig-headedly intransigent. The fact that there was certainly no negotiating with her and no way to arrive at a compromise between who she was and what she wanted and who I was and what I wanted resonated, resonates and (I'm sure) will resonate in all my dealings with womankind from my youth to my old age.

With just such a mixed bag of realities making up the Members Opposite, maybe what is required is a peculiar peace offering of just this kind. I don't think my grandmother would have approved or been interested in you or your work anymore than she approved of or was interested in me and my work. At the point of greatest reduction, you and I at least have that in common—however tenuous a point of commonality it might be.

Maybe the best that can be hoped for is that this money order reached you when it will do the most good although I obviously hope that it finds you in happier circumstances than that.

I really appreciate the fact that you kept me on your *Naughty Bits* comp list all those years. I only wish it had been your idea that the title would come to an end at a time of your own choosing as was my case with *Cerebus*. And I certainly hope that there's a bitchy Bitch graphic novel in the works that is taking up all of most of your spare time and attention.

Best wishes,
Dave

The strip ended up being pretty much what I expected. There were strange omissions, such as the fact that she nowhere mentions that she had put me on her comp list (as least i assume it was she who put me on her comp list) and that she had been on our comp list pretty much from the time that I met her (which, as I recall, was the Seattle stop on the '92 Tour). Her strip suggests that she only read Jaka's Story *and then issue 186, which sort of begs the question, "What did she do with all of the comp copies she got in the mail? Did she read any of them or throw them away unread? And if she threw them away unread, why didn't she say so? And I think the obvious answer would be that it would make her look bad. I read her work that she sent to me. She didn't read my work that I sent to her. Idle speculation, but it seemed a strange omission. She also doesn't mention that I sent her several letters of comment over the years on those occasions when there was something in* Naughty Bits *I wanted to comment on.*

She suggests in her strip that "it almost seemed he was building a wall of words between himself and most of the human race," which made for an interesting pre-emptive strike. To comment extensively and thoroughly on her strip would just seemingly reinforce that criticism. Suffice to say that I don't see it that way. I have to comment extensively and thoroughly on feminism, in my view, in order to undo what I see as the profusion of Gordian Knots in which feminism has tied up society. Some of those knots can be untied pretty easily, but others—like the big one I was untying in "Tangent": the bottom line of which was that feminists had usurped the civil rights movement from black men—require literally pages and pages of carefully researched explication in order to even identify *let alone attempt to* undo *them. The fact that feminists still call "Tangent" "Tangents" is an example of the feminist impulse towards wilful incomprehension. They simply decide that a single discussion composed of multiple threads, leading to a single conclusion, is a mere series of unrelated complaints with no validity. And all my work goes for naught.*

So, in conformity with Roberta's own suggestion, here I have limited my words to a mere two paragraphs and now switch to comic strip form temporarily....

Roberta Gregory

Hey! Remember those great old *Mad magazine* movie parodies? Weren't they *hilarious*? No, we didn't think so either, but they *were* always beautifully drawn by Mort Drucker. Which is why Dave Sim chose to use that format for his own terrifically unfunny

"REPLY TO ROBERTA GREGORY" (CONT'D)

as to Roberta's suggestion that in issue 186 I had been building "a wall of words between [myself] and most of the human race"...

I think that it would be **MORE** accurate to say that what I had been doing was building a ***BRIDGE*** of words **FROM** societal sanity **TO** those parts of the human race that had wandered off in a largely misapprehended direction in 1970...

Who seemed (and seem) to have forgotten that feminism was an **EXPERIMENT** and a radical departure from the way society had been run up to that point......an experiment that I think has been more of a failure than a success and that it was time someone (in this case me) suggested that possibility.

SALE

HARVEY PEKAR

SO INTENSE YOU CAN ACTUALLY **FEEL** HIM READING NEXT TO YOU

ARTICLE ON HIM FROM THE *NATIONAL POST*

DAVE SIM

WRITER: DAVE SIM

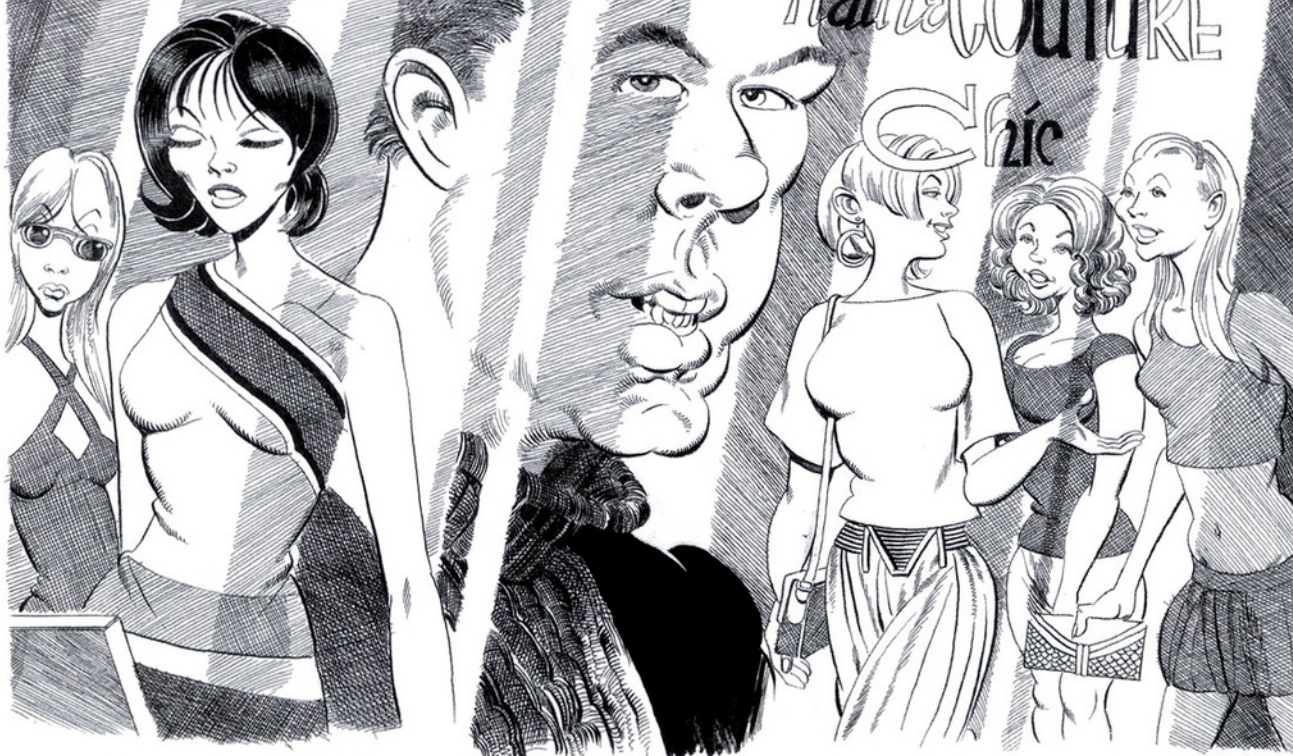
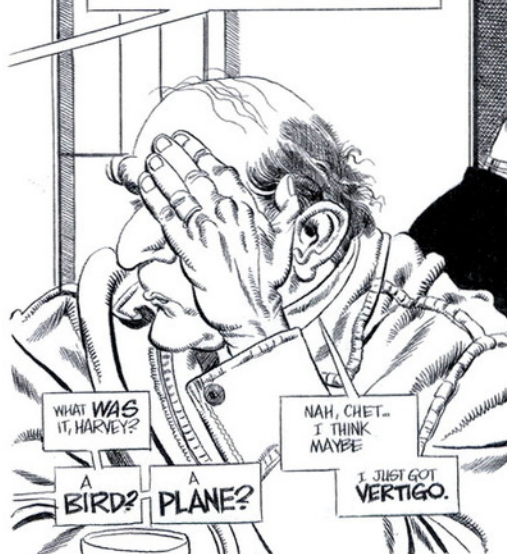
ARTIST: DAVE SIM

Roberta's recollection of her "just because you can't get laid" reaction to my criticisms of feminism is just plain **BIZARRE**. I never had much trouble getting laid. Not being a feminist made me a "challenge" and it was not uncommon for women to **USE** sex as leverage to try to get me to change my opinions

It was **NEVER** going to **WORK** but back in those pre-celibacy days, I sure wasn't going to tell **THEM** that.

As to her suggestion that "*Maybe Dave's views would be easier for me to comprehend if he'd delivered it like a 'talking head-Roberta' monologue*"

CHESTER BROWN (HE'S HEARD IT ALL BEFORE)

Well, I live
But to serve.
There's certainly a lot to be said for that approach – (Although I prefer a more challenging cartoon style like that of Mort Drucker)
and it's definitely wonderful to see – however temporarily -- the return of "talking-head Roberta" (which she used to lead off most issues) much missed by me since Roberta pulled the plug on NAUGHTY BITS.
But in the case of 186 and – more to the point, my later "*Tangent*" essay – I think it's more a case of "she who will not see" rather than "he who didn't explain it properly".
FASHION
hauteCOUTURE
Chic
Twelve years later on and five years later on respectively I don't think we've made even a tentative first step back in a sensible direction even as advances in genetics and biology are telling us that men and women are (I'll be diplomatic here) "differently abled."
Feminists want to believe that men and women can be made interchangeable by legislation, coercion and totalitarian suppression of genetic and biological evidence,
which I don't think is possible in the long-term even though women have had a 100% success rate up until now.
SALE
LOOK!
UP IN THE SKY!
And I think the 100% success rate has more to do with men sincerely not wanting to make women feel bad (and I sympathize with that: I don't want to make women feel bad either)
But I think it's more important for society to be based on the REALITY that men and women are "differently abled" than on the HALLUCINATION that men and women are interchangeable
WHAT WAS IT, HARVEY?
A BIRD?
A PLANE?
NAH, CHET.. I THINK MAYBE
I JUST GOT VERTIGO.

Most especially now that the HALLUCINATION has been pretty much entrenched in law and completely dominates the media and academe (to cite two examples) and is being imposed on Iraq and Afghanistan

If you're going to introduce Muslim cultures to freedom and democracy I think it has to be PURE freedom and democracy: a level playing field where women are allowed to COMPETE with men if they choose

But not an environment where x number of legislative seats are reserved for women. That isn't democracy, that's just trading Saddam's brand of totalitarianism for the feminists' brand of totalitarianism.

CONTINUED....

Reply to Roberta Gregory: Afterword

I think the most bizarre and disheartening thing about Roberta's strip was the exchange with Bitchy Bitch:

Roberta: *Well, what I...THINK Dave believes is that "feminists" (whatever he means by that word) have HIJACKED WESTERN CIVILIZATION. Don't I wish—*
Bitchy Bitch: *FEMINISTS? DON'T GET ME STARTED ON FEMINISTS! THEY'VE SCREWED THINGS UP FOR WOMEN MY ENTIRE ADULT LIFE!! FORCING WOMEN TO GO TO WORK...EXPECTING MEN AND WOMEN TO ACTUALLY...COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER...! IF IT WASN'T FOR THEM I'D HAVE LANDED A GUY DECADES AGO...*
Roberta: See? There's a lot of people running around who'd agree with that view...or a VERSION thereof...

This is what I mean by the Gordian Knot which women use to tie up society.

Start with the "feminists" in quotation marks, as if this is some sort of term that I've come up with on my own or a non-term without a definable meaning. I think it's obvious that a feminist is the opposite of a homemaker. Prior to 1970 it was pretty much taken as a given that if a woman got a job out of high school or college, it was only until she got engaged or married or married and pregnant. Then she quit her job and became a full-time wife and mother. A homemaker. After the 1970s, women—proto-feminists—began pushing for a redefinition whereby a woman would continue to work, not only after she was engaged but after she was married, after she got pregnant, and after the had children—basically that men and women would be interchangeable. They would both go out and work and would divide up the housework and the child-rearing chores. So, if you want a working definition of a feminist, I would say that it is a woman of marriageable age who, during her child-bearing years, chooses to work at a job rather than change from a worker to a homemaker. In light of that, Bitchy Bitch's comments on feminists "forcing women to go to work" has a clear basis in reality (breaking ranks with reality only in the sense that no one can "force" any woman to go to work unless you're talking about a Stalinist state of some kind—which is, unfortunately, pretty close to how the collectivist society of the members opposite "functions" from what I can see) and is self-revelatory of what feminism is: a movement which exerts pressure on women to choose to work rather than to be full-time wives and mothers.

Now, this is really basic stuff.

Women were one way until 1970 and then chose to become another way and to pressure each other to be another way and here we are thirty-six years later. But it takes a good couple of paragraphs just to get the discussion back into some semblance of nodding acquaintanceship with reality by pointing out all of these self-evident truths just because Roberta puts "feminists" in quotation marks. And then I'm accused of "building a wall of words between [myself] and most of the human race." The wall of words is necessary only because feminists are not beyond using any tactic, however bizarre and evasive, to avoid discussing the foundation of what they're advocating. "Feminists? What are those?" I mean, at that point they are seriously verging on a state of self-induced psychosis for the purpose of trying to project their own confused state of mind onto me. Poor crazy Dave Sim HAHAHA. He thinks there are people in the world who are something he calls "feminists." What a lunatic!

Up until 1970, the vast majority of women in Western Civilization understood that the structure of society involved the vast majority of them becoming wives, mothers, and homemakers. A woman who attempted either to avoid child-bearing, child-rearing, or who chose to have children while continuing to work would have been looked at as a peculiar and unsavoury abnormality by most of her own gender: wilful, self-absorbed, and more concerned about her own selfish interests than the larger good of her family and her society. So, yes, given that the vast majority of women now work, I would say that Western Civilization has, indeed, been hijacked by feminists.

As to "expecting men and women to actually...communicate with each other," I find that extremely peculiar as a characterization of feminists. In my experience, feminists have always been vehemently *opposed* to communication between genders except for outright capitulation on the part of men who are expected to kowtow to feminism. I remember my last girlfriend thanking me for being so supportive of her in her change of profession. "Did I have a choice?" I remember thinking. Anything having to do with feminists and jobs, in my experience, comes down to mandatory support, 100%, unquestioning and as enthusiastic as you can manage to pretend to be no matter what you think of the feminist and/or job under discussion. If she wants the job, then there's no doubt that she's perfect for it. If it makes her miserable and she wants to quit a week later, that's a wonderful idea. If she quits the job and wants it back two weeks after that, then she should definitely "go for it," if she decides to chuck what she trained for for ten years and become something completely different, it's a marvellous idea.

Most of the time, my honest answer would have been, "I think you need to be someone's stay-at-home wife and someone else's stay-at-home mother. I think that's what would make you happiest. But, you're either a feminist, or you've been so

Continued on page 35

The Dreams of Cerebus

by Craig Miller

There are a *lot* of dreams in *Cerebus*—more than one may realize at first glance.

There are the "Cerebus Dreams" stories, of course, and the *Sandman* parody in *Women*. Add the dream-like "Odd Transformation" sequences, and that pretty well wraps it up, right? Not hardly. Closer examination reveals that there are many more references to dreams than just the ones that first come to mind.

On one hand this is surprising, considering, by Dave Sim's own admission (in this issue's interview), dreams were not supposed to play a significant role in the storyline. It wasn't until Barry Windsor-Smith produced "Cerebus Dreams" for *Swords of Cerebus* 5, some six years after *Cerebus* began as a bi-monthly, then monthly, comic book, that dreams entered into Cerebus's world. The closest thing would be the "Mind Games" stories, which took place in dream-like environments while Cerebus was asleep or unconscious. They certainly could be *interpreted* as dreams, though, as reported in *FC* 8, Dave considers the "Mind Games" and dream stories separate and distinct: "The Mind Games were about contact with other consciousnesses and ostensibly higher and more adept consciousnesses, which isn't what dreams are to me." (Which begs the question: is there anything in the text itself that would prevent the Mind Games from being interpreted as dreams?)

Cataloging the Dreams

In a 6000-page work, it's difficult to study single themes or motifs because they are spread out over so many volumes. Ideally, a researcher with significant funds could buy extra copies of the books and rip out the pages pertaining to his current topic of study, creating, for example, a *Dreams of Cerebus* volume.

Students without such funds may find the list below useful: an index (with brief descriptions) of the dream references within the *Cerebus* storyline. I'd like to say "a complete index of the dream references," but I make no such guarantee. Readers are invited to send along any missing scenes.

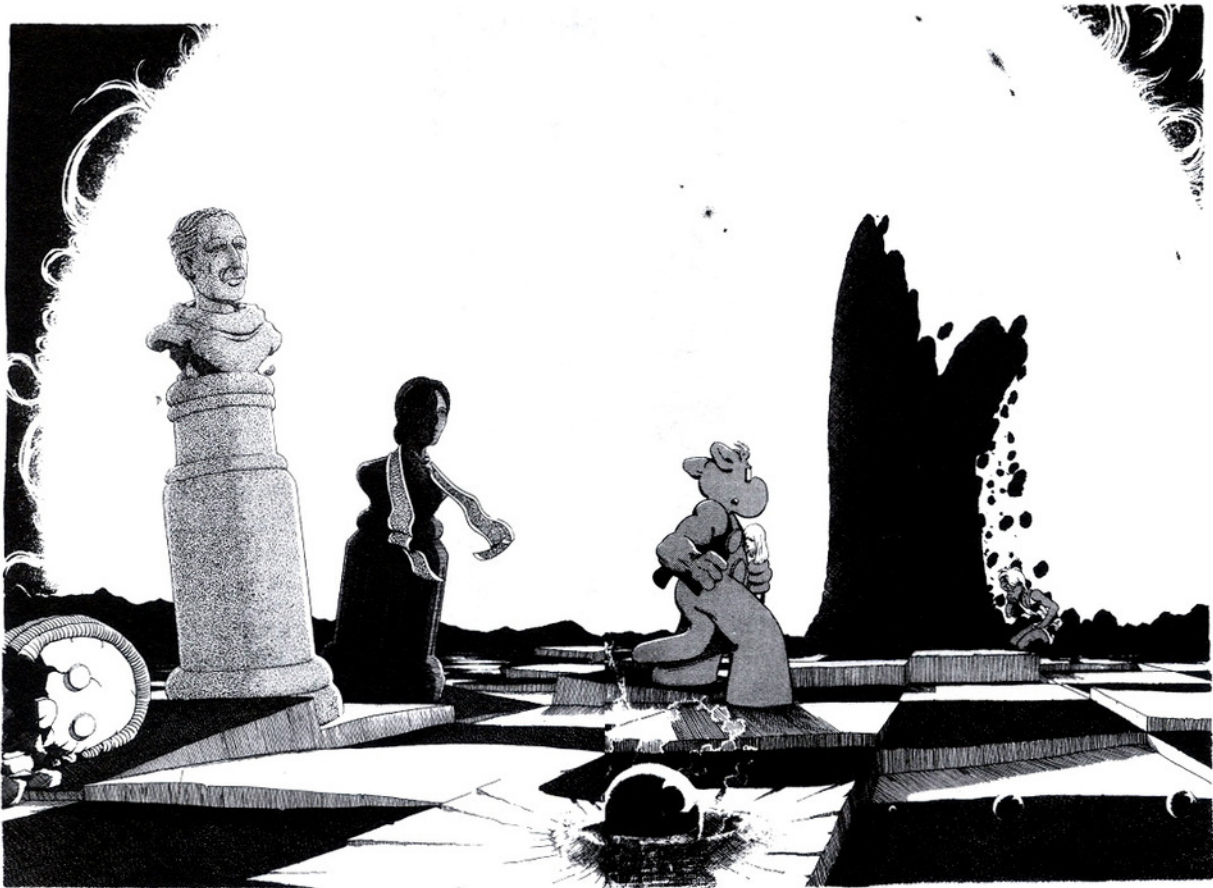
One might think such an index is a simple enough exercise given the time. And once again, because we're dealing with such a complex text, one would be mistaken. Almost immediately an ontological question, a definitional question, if you will, rears its head: What constitutes a dream in the *Cerebus* text?

Clearly a falling-asleep-and-a-dream-begins scene counts, but what about daydreams? Visions? Visions that appear during drunken stupors? As the storyline progresses, these lines get blurred more and more. Sim even alludes to this in *Guys* when Cerebus finds himself the subject of an argument between Bacchus, god of wine, and a cartoon representation of Rick Veitch (creator of the dream-inspired comic book series *Roarin' Rick's Rare Bit Fiends).* Who gets to guide Cerebus through the vision? In that case, it turns out to be Rick: Cerebus is, indeed, *dreaming*.

Rick's Story is filled with various visions. Should they count as "dreams"? For that matter, what about Dave's sudden appearance in that volume (pp. 191-197) in which he has a chat with Cerebus and then just as suddenly vanishes?

Before that, in *Minds*, during Dave's conversation with Cerebus, he presents the aardvark with a series of (for lack of a better term) "what if" scenarios, playing out Cerebus's marriage to Jaka, and how it inevitably ends in disaster, no matter what. Visions? Sure. But dreams? In the context of our current study? Probably not.

And what about the entire "last day" sequence in which Cerebus's life flashes before him and he has a vision of heaven?

Beats me.

A Cerebus dream from Women

The following list, then, may be complete or incomplete depending on any given reader's expectations or definitions of what should be considered a "dream." I have tried to maintain some consistency as to what gets included and what does not, but, because some of the lines are fuzzy, I'm not even sure I can guarantee perfect consistency.

Consistent Purpose?

One of the original purposes for compiling the list was to see if, given a grand overview possible with such condensation of scenes scattered throughout 6000 pages, a general design or theme would emerge throughout the various dreams. Surely a writer as meticulous as Sim would have such a design or underlying commonality to the various dreams and where they appeared in the text.

I must admit to some frustration when I found myself unable to find such commonality and figured it was my own lack of perception, so it was with some relief that Sim mentions in this issue's interview that each dream is to be taken individually, not as a portion of some overarching theme. Nevertheless, it would be an interesting experiment to see if there are perhaps some unintentional connections unseen even by the author. Just because *I* couldn't discover any doesn't mean someone else couldn't.

In retrospect, the *Cerebus* epic would have been diminished if dreams had not played an important part of the story. The connection between dreams and the creation of art has been mentioned so often in recent times that it's a bit of a tired cliché (yes, we know, getting lost in a story is like being in a dream; watching a film—especially in a dark theater—is like a dream; etc. etc. etc.), but that doesn't make it less true or less significant. With *Cerebus* telling the story of one life, it was critical to include dreams. Credit Sim with recognizing this fact after Windsor-Smith's "Cerebus Dreams" pages arrived and building on that foundation to add to the complexity of Cerebus's saga.

And now, in the order in which they appeared, here are the dreams of *Cerebus:*

Swords of Cerebus 5
In the only Cerebus story not written by Sim, Barry Windsor-Smith's "Cerebus Dreams" has the aardvark dreaming of a mad fiddler stealing the spotlight away from him.

AV in 3D 1
In "Cerebus Dreams II," Cerebus flies through the air, seemingly out of control as he smashes into a framed piece of glass, gets stuck, and careens into the ear of a giant stone aardvark statue.

Church and State:
Bran Mak Muffin to Cerebus: "'All will be as the great Cerebus wills it.' That is the Great Dream." (p. 394)

Bran to Cerebus: "You have but to tell your followers that you dream of conquest. They will do the rest." (p. 401)

Cerebus: "So! It looks like the Great Dream is happening just like Bran said it would."
Sophia: "'Great Dream'? What's that?"
Cerebus: "The Great *Dream!* Where everything happens the way Cerebus wants it to."
Sophia: "Is this *your* dream—or *his?*"
Cerebus: It's *everyone's* great dream. People have been waiting for centuries for the Great Cerebus."
Sophia: "It must be a great disappointment to them that you're so *short* and *obnoxious*." (p. 426)

"Odd Transformations"
After the death of Weishaupt, Cerebus falls asleep amongst his sacks of gold coins and dreams of his father's housekeeper, the flying baby, Sophia's mom, a dense forest, chess pieces, the moon, and Sophia/Jaka." (pp. 515-527)

"Odd Transformations Part Two"
Cerebus dreams of Lord Julius, quickgrass, Sump Thing, waves, Elrod, Theresa and Michelle, and Jaka. (pp. 534-551)

"Odd Transformations No. 3: Dead Friends"
After Cerebus defeats the Thrunk and enjoys a huge meal, he dreams of Bran, Weishaupt, the moon, the Regency Elf, and the gold sphere. (pp. 756-771)

"Odd Transformations 4"
After Cerebus has sex with the imprisoned Astoria, he falls asleep upon her and dreams of being chained and almost drowning (pp. 877-881). Later, he falls asleep again and dreams the construction of a giant statue, trees, Astoria/Sophia, and a canon. (pp. 888-897)

Astoria during her trial for killing the Lion of Serrea: "It was like a *dream*. I knew I *had* to—the way you *do* in dreams. I can't explain it." (p. 948)

Melmoth
Though not a dream per se, Cerebus has a vision of an imprisoned Astoria/Suenteus Po. (p. 112-113)

Cerebus dreams of being pope, the tower, being stabbed, and the ascending tower. (pp. 118-120)

Flight
In "Mind Game 6" in the Eighth Sphere, Po tells Cerebus about the first night the aardvark had spent with Jaka: "For the first time in your conscious memory...a single tear, full and warm, rolled down your right cheek and you fell into a very deep and entirely dreamless slumber." (p. 133)

Cirin is furious when Mrs. Thatcher informs her that Mrs. Copps has instructed Mr. Hammond to enlarge the gold sphere to 46 meters across. Cirin: "It was a *dream* I told her about. I was just making *conversation*." (p. 157; the Copps/Hammond discussion is on page 94)

More "Mind Game 6": Po tells Cerebus, "But it was [Archbishop Posey] who was the most profoundly affected by you. You came to him in a dream some weeks ago and beckoned to him....He fled the Sequester of the Church in the Upper City to search for you...." (p. 193)

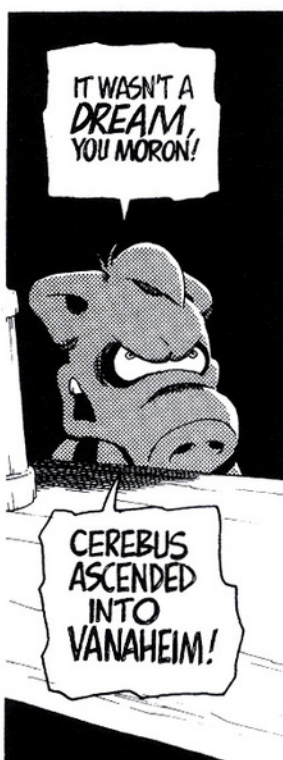
Cirin dreams of her own ascension. (pp. 202-203)

Women
[Sim begins a parody of Sandman. *Not surprisingly, it contains the most dreams of any* Cerebus *story.]*

"Cirin's" (Serna's) dream told to Cerebus: "I had a dream, you know, dear. Just last night. A very old man and a very old woman came to me, holding a perfect gold sphere between them, which the offered to me. And now here you are. Here you are." (p. 27)

While taking a nap, Cerebus dreams of a chess board and a crumbling mountain (pp. 68-69), begins to sleepwalk and grabs his gold sphere, then dreams of himself as a warrior being embraced by Jaka (pp. 74-75). (It is during this sleepwalking dream that the mountain falls on Upper Felda.)

Later during this dream, the Regency Elf tells Cerebus that she's actually the fake Regency Elf, that in essence Cerebus created her, and that makes her Cerebus's "dream daughter," though Cerebus insists she is not. (pp. 100-103)

Following a quote ("But, you know, I know when it's a dream") comes Astoria's dream: she runs to her father, who hugs her, then begins groping her. She slaps him: it's Artemis as Swoon. (pp. 107-110)

Dave on Dreams

Miller: *If I have my timeline correct—and I'm pretty sure I do—Barry Windsor-Smith's "Cerebus Dreams" story in* Swords of Cerebus *5 was the first dream in the* Cerebus *saga (excepting "Mind Game 1," which, as I mentioned in* Following Cerebus *8, I still associate with the dream sequences, even if you do not; nevertheless—). Eventually, dreams play a significant part of the story. Did you always intend this to be the case? Or did Barry's story inspire this aspect?*

Sim: No, I definitely didn't intend for dreams to play a large part in the *Cerebus* storyline and yes, Barry's "Cerebus Dreams" story triggered the resulting onslaught of dream content. When it came in I thought it was a great idea and particularly well suited to what it was that I was trying to do: an actual life. A good third of all actual lives are spent dreaming so it was really impossible to over-emphasize the presence of dreams unless I did over 100 issues of them.

CM: *Of course, the decision to parody* Sandman*—which you could not have know in the early years of* Cerebus*—adds to the number of dreams, particularly in the* Women *volume. Did the opportunity to include more dreams influence your decision to focus on Neil Gaiman's series?*

DS: No, not consciously (nyuck, nyuck, nyuck). The storyline was "surfacing" towards what I hoped—two years up ahead in what would become *Reads*—would be Reality or at least "Reality." A core part of that Reality or "Reality" involved the Roach parodies coming to an end—the more real the world the less possible it is to include super-heroes, even parody super-heroes in it. Neil's *Sandman* seemed an opportune exit since, on the one hand, he (Sandman, I mean) had a super-natural (ergo super-hero) aspect to him but on the other hand he was also an iconic representation of larger ideas. He was the character Sandman but he was also Dream, an incarnation of a state of existence. Did (and do) such Super Realities as Beings exist? In addition to the fact that

"I definitely didn't intend for dreams to play a large part in the *Cerebus* storyline...Barry's "Cerebus Dreams" story triggered the resulting onslaught of dream content."

all people dream is there such a thing as The Dreaming and/or Dream? That was the conscious writing intention with the dreams themselves just being the most effective way to ask and hopefully begin to answer the question. Even though it wasn't a conscious decision, I think it was a very good decision since it brought up the number of dreams to a more realistic ratio within the 300 issues.

CM: *A while back you wrote to me, "The Mind Games were about contact with other consciousnesses and ostensibly higher and more adept consiousnesses, which isn't what dreams are to me." After reading and rereading and rereading all of the dream sequences in* Cerebus*, I'm at a loss to discern any consistent thematic aspect, which I suppose makes them*

Sim pokes a little fun at Neil Gaiman's *Sandman.*

more realistic, but to save me additional frustration, I'll just come out and ask you: do dreams serve a single function in the storyline, or should each dream be interpreted as an individual and distinct event unrelated to the other dreams?

DS: Yes and no. It's guesswork. No matter how much research goes into it, we still don't have clue one as to why we dream or what dreams are. The dreams in the Cerebus storyline don't have any common thematic link unless it's something really vague like Cerebus' mostly unconscious certainty that he is intended to fulfill some Large Destiny or other and his, again, mostly unconscious awareness of all the things that get in the way of that. Consciously, he tends to see it that he is supposed to conquer the known world and become King Cerebus absolute ruler and dictator but that tends to be at odds with the reality of the Large Destiny so he gets locked into a yin-and-yang duality thing—the Large Destiny he's actually intended to fulfill getting in the

way of the Large Destiny he envisions and vice versa. Apart from that I do have my own theories of dreams, none of which have any more or less evidence to support it over the others. In Cerebus I tended to take the view that dreams are a hodge-podge of what we have just gone through, what we are going through and what we will be going through all filtered through our own internal Iconic Imagery Assortment and turned into little entertainments which all parts of ourselves watch while we're sleeping and which are understood differently—and, I suspect, more accurately by our higher natures (souls) than by our conscious-but-sleeping minds. I also can't rule out the collectivist notion of dreaming, that there is a universal otherworldly construct like The Dreaming that we all inhabit when we sleep and dream. It would certainly explain the fact that we can be certain while dreaming that we are walking around inside Grandma's House and when we wake up wonder how we could ever have thought that that was Grandma's House when it doesn't look anything like Grandma's House. It's someone else's Grandma's House, or an iconic totality of all Grandma's Houses being dreamed about at the same time. Since there was really no way to convey that in the comic without a lot of groundwork, I tended to just use the hodge-podge of personal experiences model which, for one thing, allowed me to use various characters that were otherwise never going to get fitted back into the story and for me to develop my own idea of what Cerebus' internal iconic imagery would be. I don't think I did a particularly good job most of the time. It got stuck in that weird "mini-entertainment" construct and so, to me, wasn't very accurate as far as what dreams are, but it did make for good imaginative comic-book pages which was more to the point. I also had to balance the difference that I thought Cerebus' dreams would be from my own. I have a very wide-ranging and curious intellect. Cerebus is the original Homer Simpson style Id (Must Become King of the World, Must Get Jaka Back). Do we dream differently? All uninformed guesswork.

CM: *Does your quote above apply only to dreams within the* Cerebus *story, or dreams in the real world as well? Or perhaps to get to the point more precisely: the Bible is replete with God's using dreams to impart information to individuals. Do you take these at face value and consider that possible in present times (i.e. dreams as "contact" with the "higher and more adept consciousness" of God)?*

DS: Well, that's all guesswork, too. I tend to pay very close attention to my dreams on the supposition that at the very least they represent a "Hot" (you're getting warmer, warmer) and "Cold" (oops no, getting cooler, now...cooler...cold) duality. Having no idea what they are, I try to stick to the "broad brushstrokes" that way. There are dreams I wake up from feeling and being positive and there are dreams where I just want to go back to sleep and try again for a better one. Whatever my dreams might or might not be telling me, I do think that I have a much better chance of improvement if I just do things better when I'm awake. Work harder and more efficiently, pray more, give more alms to the poor, fight my own appetites and materialism. I think I have been contacted from time to time by God or what I assume is actually just "God awareness" in my dreams. Very infrequently and usually not much more than "You're on the right track, keep going" which Mike Kaluta (who definitely isn't God) told me when I showed him my artwork back in 1973. I think that's very different from Jacob's Ladder or the seven fat kine devouring seven lean kine which, to me, involved dreaming prophets very centrally in the debate between God and YHWH. When the Age of Prophets ended in 632 A.D. I think that Higher Level of Dreaming came to an end, too, and since then dreams have just been dreams. Dream analysis to me is in the same category as psychiatry: I tend to see it as self-defeating navel-gazing when compared to hard work and pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps. When I talk about higher up and more adept consciousnesses it's more in the sense of our souls and/or spirits, guardian angels or Guardian Angels. Whether our guardian angels are housed within us or are apart from us or where we stop and they begin or to what extent they participate in our dreams or if they are our dreams, I have no idea. I don't think anyone does. My view is that there are spirit constructs within us, around us, and over us which we have contact with and which know a great deal more than we do though I think we're almost completely unaware of them almost

Cover illustration from Cerebus *166*

"I tend to pay very close attention to my dreams."

At a tavern, Cerebus tells Fleagle and Drew about his ascension, Drew says, "Y'know, ah hed me a dream jest lak thet once. Thar wuz this *big ol' hairy blue dawg—"* Cerebus interrupts: "It wasn't a *dream*, you moron! Cerebus ascended into Vanaheim!" (p. 115)

Pages 116 and 117 contain competing views of dreams via Kevillist Astoria and Cirin. Kevillists embrace dreams and the creativity they inspire, whereas Cirinists take the opposite view ("For it is in dreams that depravity and wickedness find their surest hand-hold.").

While Cirin is in a coma, she encounters the Roach and reprimands him as a "filthy little boy." (pp119-121)

Jaka dreams about a maze, a book, Missy, and herself as a small child. The child tells the adult Jaka that "Cerebus is alive...and he loves you very much." (pp. 127-128)

Henrot-Gultch dreams about the roach and pummels him with her umbrella. (pp. 139-140)

Having fallen down drunk at the tavern, Cerebus dreams about Astoria. (pp. 167-168)

Minds
As he's floating through space on his small cube of rock, Cerebus dreams of an early (his first?) killing—the death of a young bully who mocked him as "freak boy." (pp. 67-71)

Guys
In a drunken stupor, Cerebus finds himself the center of a debate between Eddie Campbell's Bacchus and Roarin' Rick (Veitch) as to whether Cerebus is drunk or dreaming. When Rick points out that Cerebus has both ears and no eyepatch, Bacchus admits defeat and disappears. From there, Rick leads Cerebus through a symbolism-laden adventure. (pp. 69-84)

Cerebus talks to Bear about a dream he had that included Bear. (pp. 96-98)

After Cerebus and Joanne have sex, Cerebus dreams about Astoria, Lord Julius, Missy, Rick, Jaka, and others, then about himself as a child, a warrior, and prime minister, then his marriage to Joanne, with her receiving a rousing applause. (pp. 384-392)

Rick's Story
Cerebus dreams of an attack by Cirin, then dreams of going home. (pp. 162-166)

Going Home
Asleep with Jaka, Cerebus dreams of himself wearing Sophia's chain mail bikini and lying next to the Missy doll. (pp. 134-135)

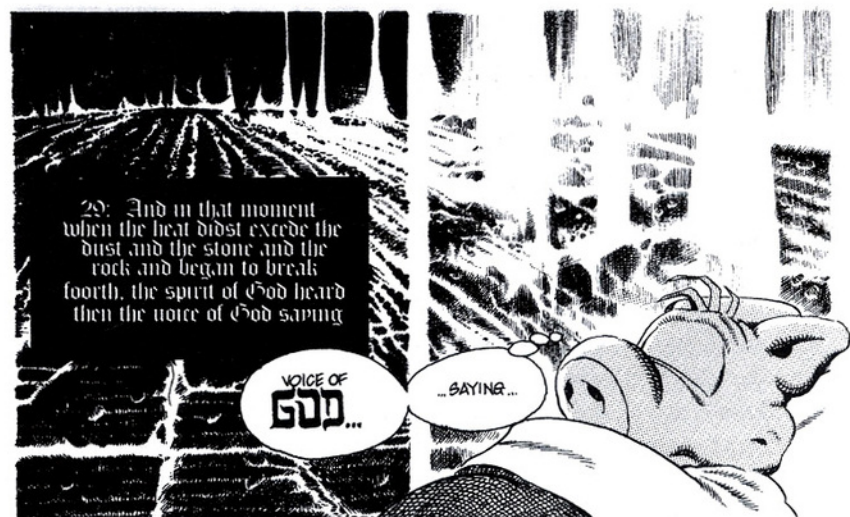
As Cerebus and Jaka ride in a through Montgomery Falls, Cerebus has a lengthy dream in which Alan Moore tells Rick Veitch, Cerebus, and Jaka a story, "Raising Up the Bride." Rick explicates the supposed symbols and archetypes in the story. Jaka comments that she "finds the whole subject so *fascinating*— 'Raising Up the Bride,' dreams, the moon." But Cerebus sees a horrifying vision of a demonic, skeletal bride and wants to leave. Finally Jaka wakes him up: "You're having a bad dream." (pp. 149-161) (The "Raising Up the Bride" theme reappears in the F. Stop Kennedy text on page 252: "We produce a Cirin who can raise up all brides—and presently the bridal species is regarded as our highest achievement. If anyone can find a lesson in that, let him stand forth.")

Form & Void
Mary Ernestway's first dream involves her failed attempt to shoot a warthog. (p. 498)

In Mary's second dream, she meets a lion. Before she can shoot, he starts talking. But he inches forward and eventually eats Mary. (p. 507-509)

Cerebus dreams of Rick, who tells Cerebus that the Cirinists executed him (Rick) six days ago. (p. 582)

The night before arriving at Sand Hills Creek with Jaka, Cerebus dreams of being in a tavern with Jaka. He is glad to see old friends, but Jaka is talking about the Catacombs, and "Crotch-Face" is pulling out a knife, presumably to stab her. (pp. 648-649)

The Last Day
Cerebus dreams about the creation of the universe. (pp. 2-40)

all of the time. Charles Dickens through Jacob Marley put it best, I think, in his lecture to Ebenezer Scrooge:

> *"It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness...This earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed...any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness...no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused...Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!*

If you read that and really understand it and take it to heart then I think dream analysis and psychiatry and all the related claptrap stand out in sharp relief as the navel-gazing and lotus-eating that they are. That to me is Charles Dickens prodigious intellect and humanity stretching upward—a man's reach should always exceed his grasp!—and accessing whatever level of Super Reality he was accessing. This is what higher consciousnesses would have to tell us if they could get through to us. I think you can see what I mean that that's very much at odds with the sort of sensibility that tries to sort out what the movie theatre meant last night in your dream and why the usher was wearing pink ballet slippers. There are people going to bed hungry all over the world. Prioritize!

CM: *Based on pages 117 and 147 of* Women, *I'm assuming that the Cirinist position on dreams is that they have equal weight with the waking world, the "real world," so to speak. Yet the dreams in* Cerebus *are very clearly dreams—*

"[I am]very much rejecting [the] ideology...that the borderline between the dreaming world and the waking world is narrower than we might suspect...[T]hose sorts of ideas lead in very bad directions."

there is no David Lynch-like blurring of the lines between the dreaming and waking worlds (unless I am completely misreading the book, which I would acknowledge is a possibility). If I'm right, are you consciously rejecting the Cirinist ideology?

DS: Yes, very much rejecting that ideology. It is an interesting *thesis* that the borderline between the dreaming world and the waking world is narrower than we might suspect and that various tricks can be developed to allow for lucid dreaming and efficaciousness of various stripes, but I think all of those sorts of ideas lead in very bad directions in that there's always something more valuable to accomplish in the average day. *No space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused.* I read an article a while back that liberals are more likely than conservatives to wake up in a cold sweat from their dreams or to have dreams that terrify them. That's what I mean by the broad brush-strokes of what our dreams can tell us. If you wake up terrified and in a cold sweat from your dreams then I would seriously take a closer look at your life and start changing things for the better, giving up vices, etc. It would seem to me the wrong lesson from that to read books on how to dream lucidly, how to bring the dreaming and waking world into closer proximity or how to "use" your dreams in some way.

CM: *Perhaps more to the point, is it accurate to say that (a) the Cirinists' view of dreams would be consistent with a Freudian interpretation of dreams as a symbolic window into the unconscious mind, and that (b) you have rejected that view?*

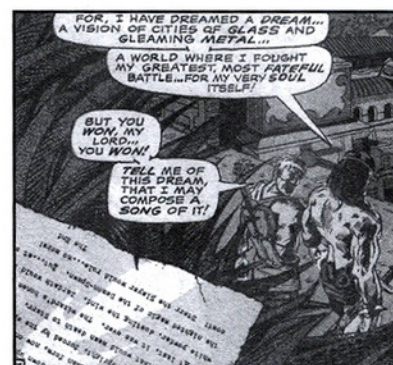
DS: Yes. I think there's a sharp erosion from pre-Freudian civilization to Freudian civilizations to Jungian civilization. You start with dreams as a symbolic window into the unconscious mind and if you don't watch yourself pretty soon you're talking about the unconscious mind as a separate entity and then as part of a Larger Construct and then working on these Large Enactments as if you know what you're tampering with. I suspect that Freud just by institutionalizing hysterical navel-gazing as therapeutic might very well have set the Nazi war machine in motion. It's probably relatively harmless if you know what you're tampering with and you're just giving hysterical young women a "talking cure," but when you start taking that "talking cure" and begin talking about the unconscious mind and the id and repressed urges and then the Unconscious, the Id and Repressed Urges, then I think there's always a danger as that begins to circulate generally that you can find yourself unleashing The Unconscious, The Id and The Repressed Urges of, say, Aryan Racial Nationalism ("Don't hold it in—repression is the worst thing possible, let it all out") with the best of intentions. In retrospect, totally repressed Aryans seem like the lesser of two evils, having seen aht Aryans "venting" led to. I think the Cirinists, being women, were particularly susceptible to this because they are always obsessed with borderlands, wanting to break down distinctions between men and women, homosexuals and heterosexuals and so on. Whatever you want to call that inclination in human beings, I think it's the underpinning of mysticism, psychiatry, dream analysis, and so on and I think it's terrifically unhealthy.

Barry Windsor-Smith's Dreams

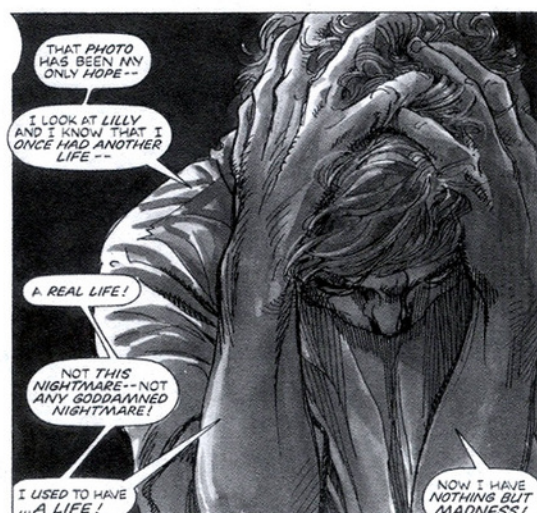
Particularly in light of the revelations in *OPUS* 1 and 2, Barry Windsor-Smith's autobiographical art books, "Cerebus Dreams" is fascinating in how it fits not only within the continuity of the Cerebus storyline, but within the continuity of BWS's work—specifically, the prominence of dreams. One of his best Conan stories is "The Frost Giant's Daughter"—admittedly an adaptation of the Robert E. Howard original, but Windsor-Smith's dynamic storytelling gives it a startling power. (Ironically, a Roy Thomas/BWS Conan "warm-up" piece that appeared in *Chamber of Darkness* 4, "The Sword and the Sorcerers," emphasizes a dream-versus-reality puzzle to an even larger extent.) An early Doctor Strange story that BWS plotted and pencilled has the Master of the Mystic Arts facing Nightmare .

More sophisticated treatments of reality-versus-fantasy, whether utilizing dreams or visions or what-have-you, can be found in "Weapon X" and the Paradoxman feature in *Storyteller*.

In *OPUS* 1 Windsor-Smith describes his drawing process as "somewhat similar" to "lucid dreaming" (p. 97), whereas his "own dream states are relatively unremarkable" (*OPUS* 2, p. 79). His description of the Endless Waves of Time in the first volume has a dream-like quality, which seems appropriate because his initial response was to dismiss the experience as a dream or nightmare. By the end of *OPUS* 2, Windsor-Smith has connected his fully-conscious extraordinary experiences with the "supranormal events encountered in the world of dreams," and argues that there is not a Cartesian Dualism between physics and metaphysics, but a unity.

Which, in a roundabout way, gets us back to "Cerebus Dreams." In 1983, it seemed to be a cute, clever little story, not Windsor-Smith's most challenging work, but entertaining nevertheless. Now, within the context of BWS's much larger body of work, it seems significantly more complex and quite amazing. See if you don't agree.
—CM

Top: "Weapon X." Above: "The Sword and the Sorcerers."

"The Frost Giant's Daughter"

"While the World Spins Mad!"

"Paradoxman"

CEREBUS DREAMS

DRIP

PAP!

BA-A-AWK!
BUK!
BUK!
!
GOBBLE!
GOLP!
GOBBLE
GOBBLE
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

CLEP
CLE
CLEP

CLEP
CLAP
CLAP!
CLAP
CLA
BAFF!

CLAP
CLAP!
CLAP
CLA
LAP!

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
PCLAPCLA
AP CLAP CL
AP CLAPC

CLAP!
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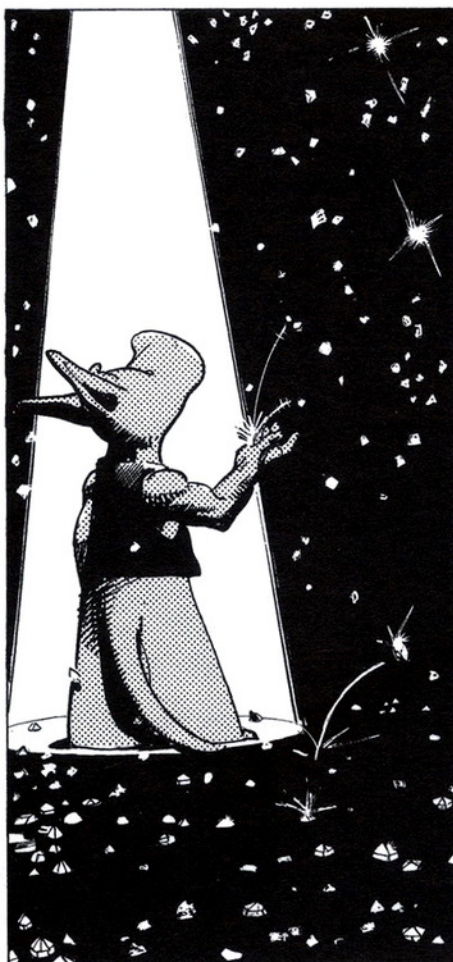
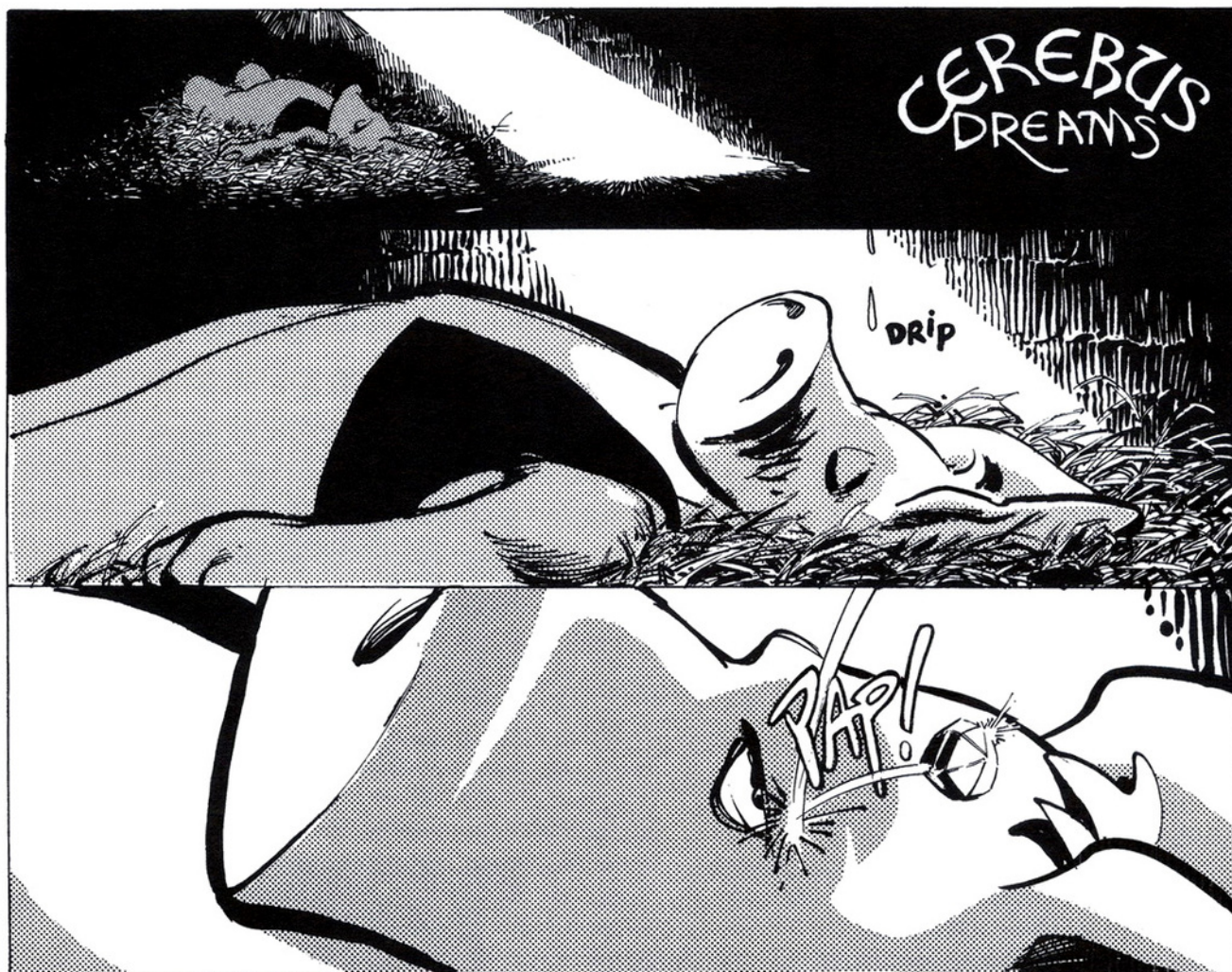
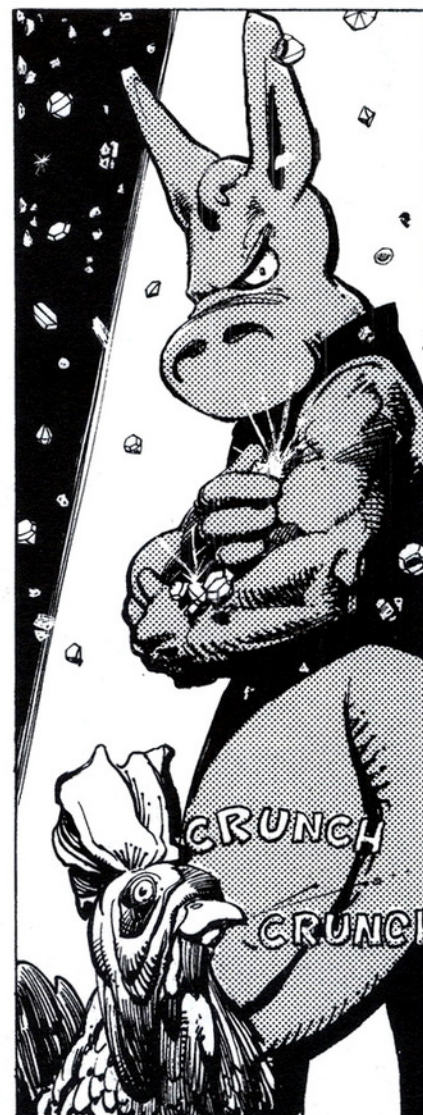
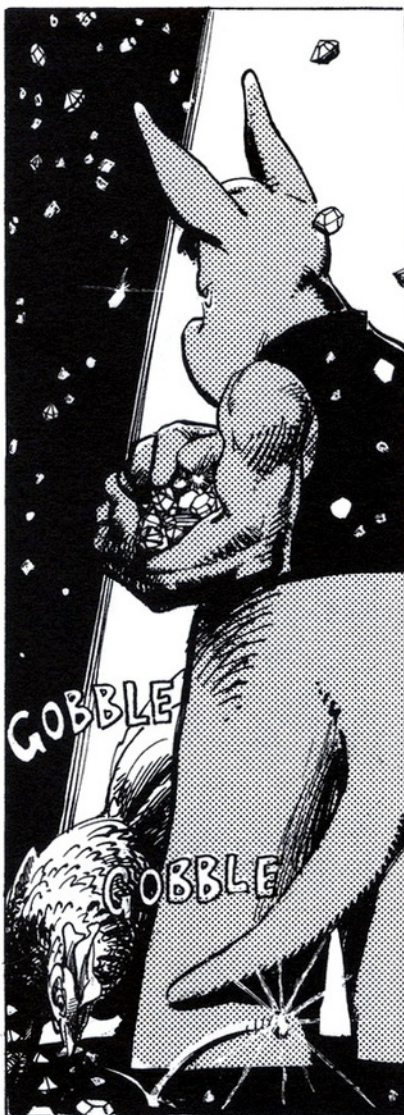
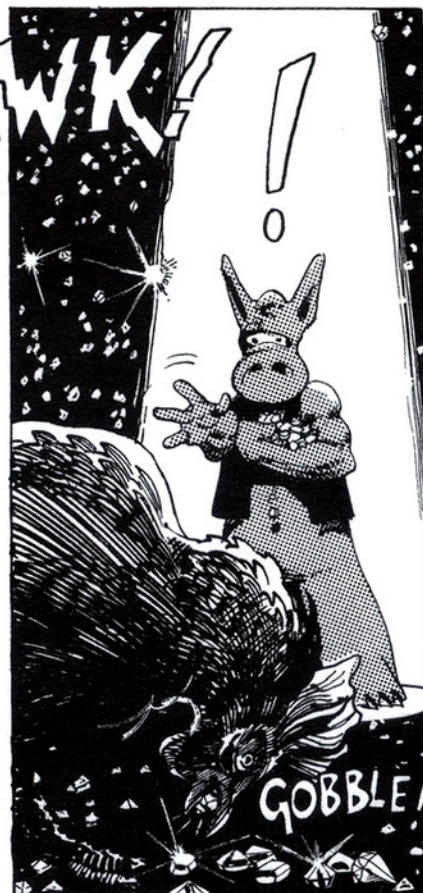
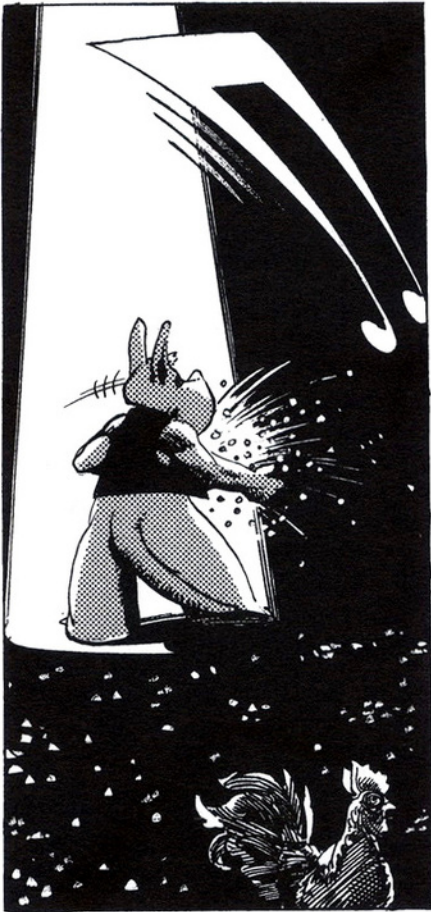
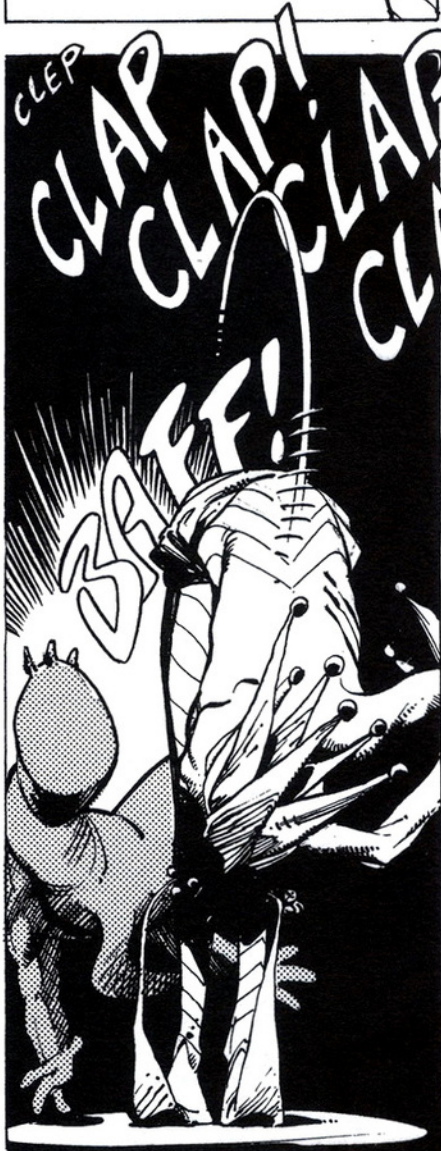
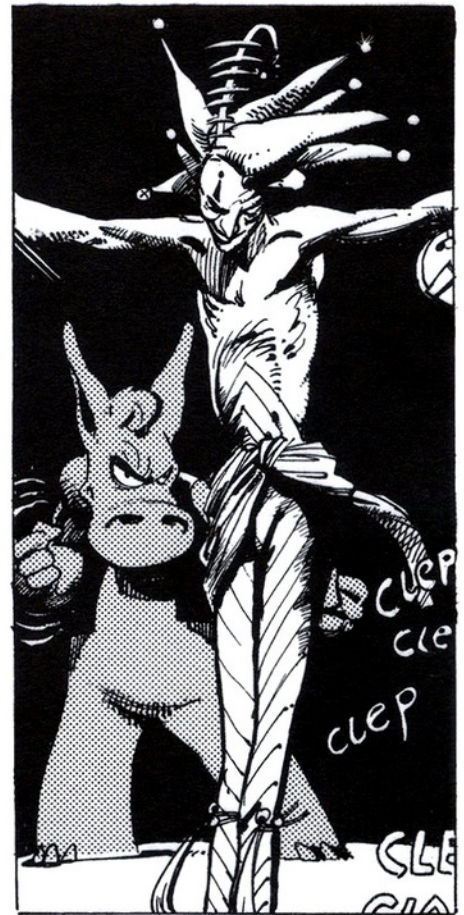
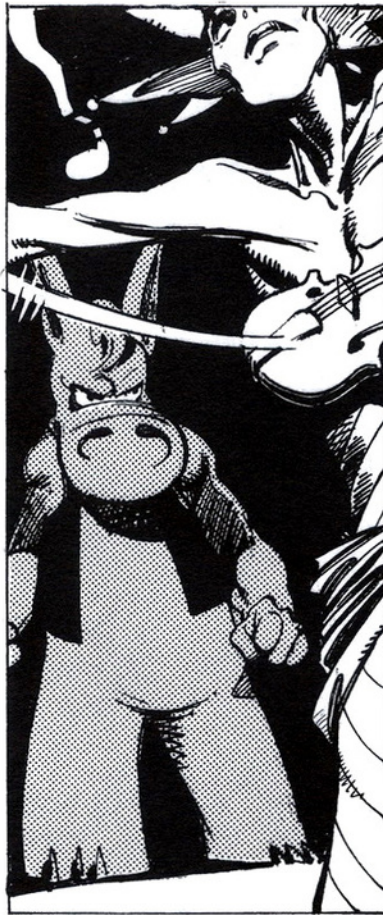
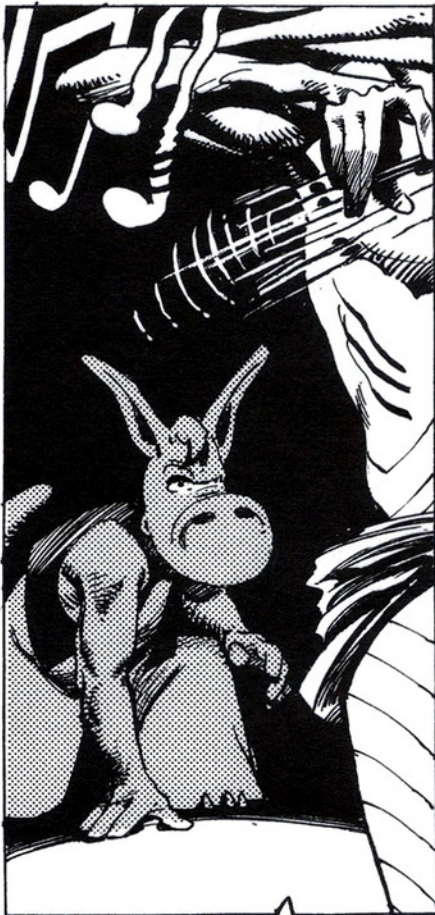

Cerebus Dreams II

by Dave Sim

The second "Cerebus Dreams" story—Barry Windsor-Smith's innovation in *Swords of Cerebus* volume five was the first—was originally published in *A-V in 3D*. Ray Zone, who did the 3D effects, explained the process to us and, as I recall, emphasized using a thinker-than-normal ink line, which Gerhard did and which I chose to ignore for the most part.

It's a very quick dream, perhaps a fever dream while Cerebus has his head cold, or a cat-nap dream.

Page One

Cerebus is dressed as the Pope and soaring through the air, borne aloft on wind currents which are carrying him and the gliding seabirds forward above turbulent waters (symbolizing the relative safety of his present position in life) with the horizon dominated by a repetitive building form that might be an ornate bridge, when a series of elaborate and ornate doors loom up before him. The ornate doors represent potential futures, the fact that there are so many of them indicates that Cerebus has any number of choices as to which future direction to take. In the middle distance there's a rocky column up-thrust from the waters, virtually inaccessible (or at the very least a good arduous climb) with an area fenced off at its summit. This is the nature of the future that Cerebus envisions for himself, as opposed to simply passing through one doorway or another. It won't be as easy as a chosen door, it will be a hard, arduous climb, and even if he gets there, it's not certain where "there" is or what it is (even that is closed off to him) that he will attain be getting "there."

Page Two

The waters are becoming even more turbulent and are rising unimaginably quickly (or is the upthrust column and continuous building sinking?). One thing is certain, and that's that Cerebus' position as he approaches his own imagined destiny is more precarious. The fenced-off area seems almost within reach, and one of the columns supporting the wroght iron fence opens to reveal a crown. Cerebus reaches out for the crown and seems destined to be drawn to it but is born away by a wind current. The act of reaching for the crown has closed off all of his other options, all his potential futures, and now there's only a single door instead of multiple doors. He's borne steadily backwards and hurtles through a door within a door—which opens easily to allow him passage—passing easily but with no control into the single future which remains to him, which causes the solid continuous building to crumble from the future into the present and fall into the now less turbulent waters. A large frame—suggesting another door—looms up behind Cerebus, and he's mashed into it, giving the appearance of a decidedly less smooth transition from his immediate future into his later future than from his present into his immediate future.

Page Three

And as it turns out, he doesn't even make a transition from his immediate future into his later future but is, instead, wedged tightly into the frame, which has itself collapsed from a larger to a smaller size, emphasizing his confinement within what should have been a mere transition point. What he thinks is a transition from his immediate future into his later future turns out to be a trap from which he will be unable to extricate himself. And even as the solid continuous building continues to collapse from his distant future into his immediate future, he's borne backward, helplessly, in the direction he has already come, barely maintaining any elevation over the rising waters.

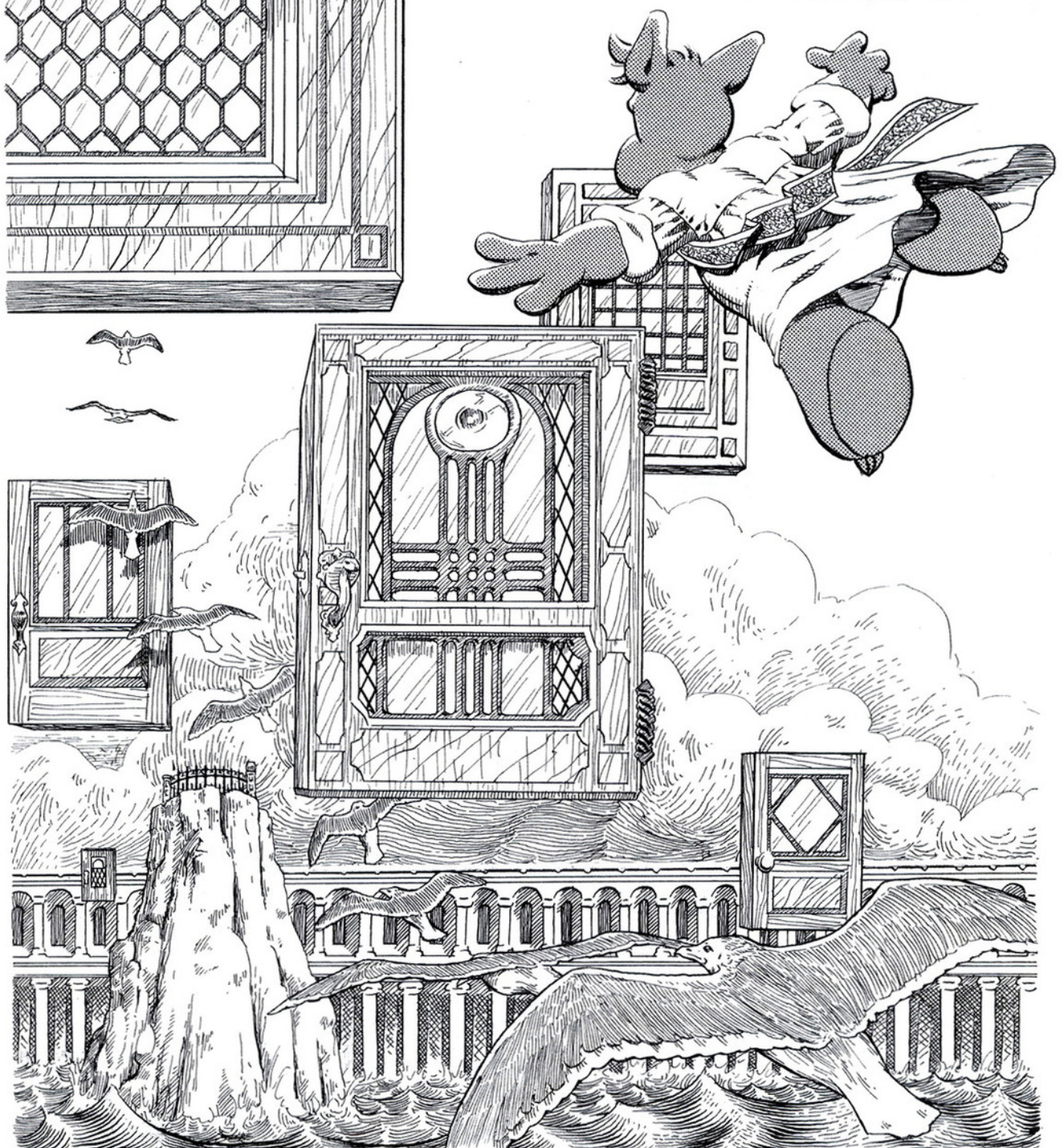
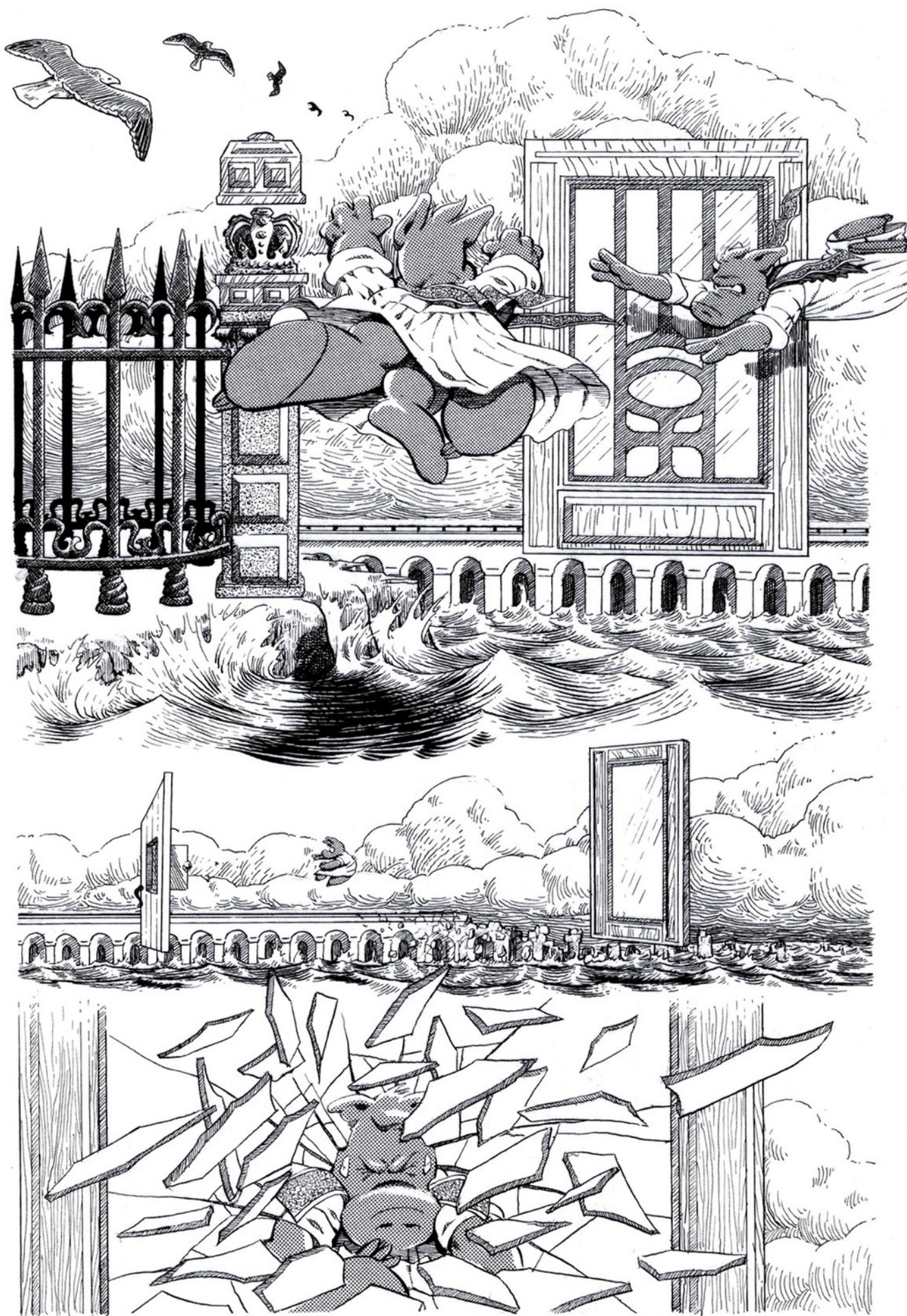
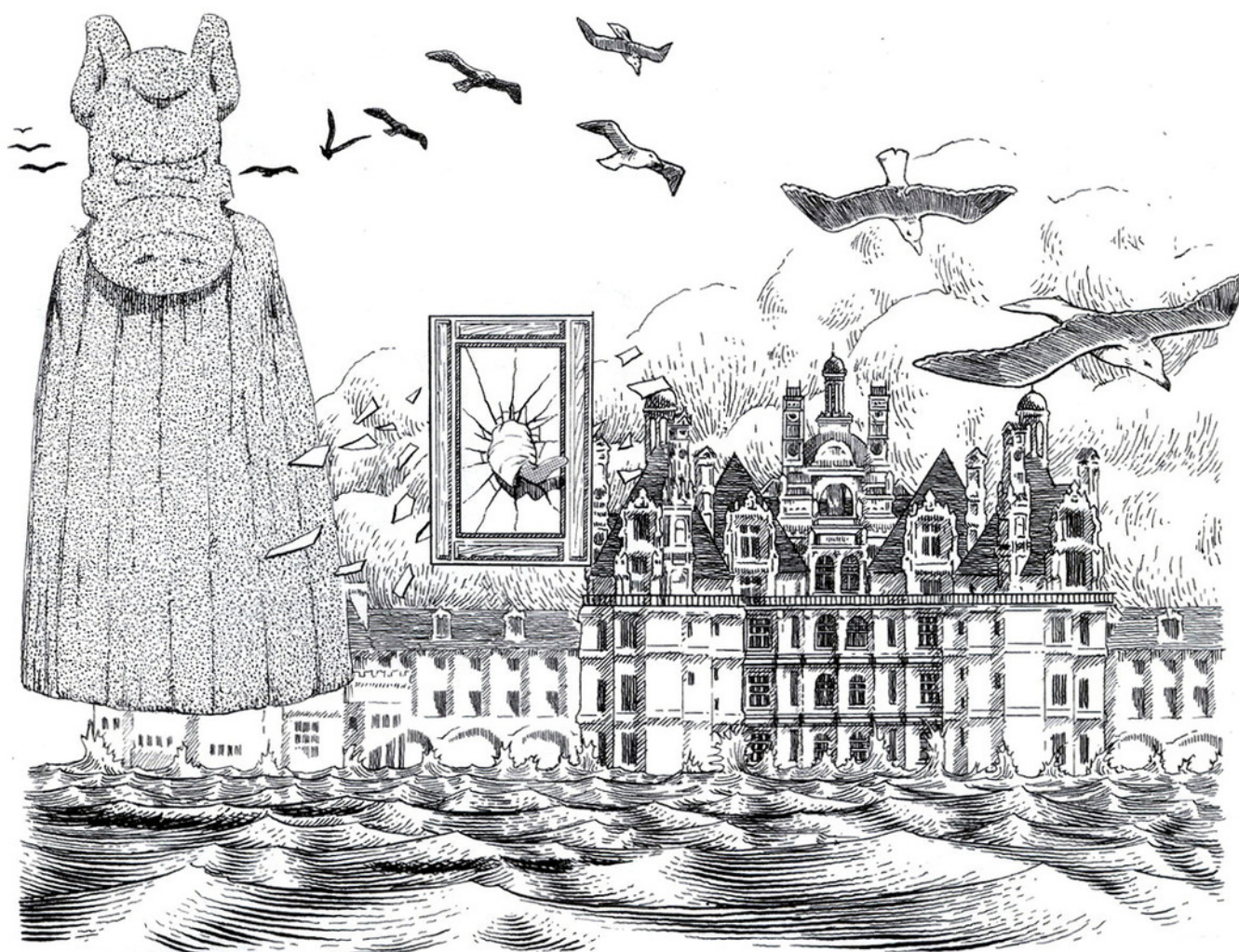
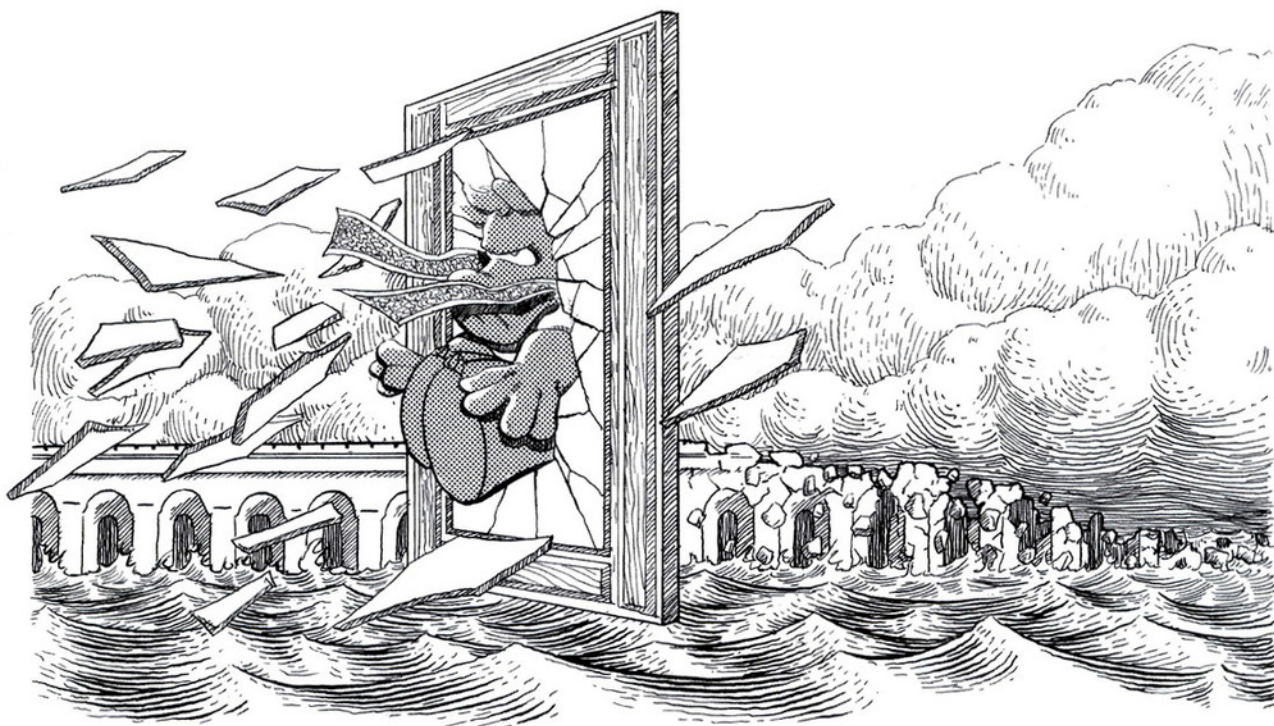
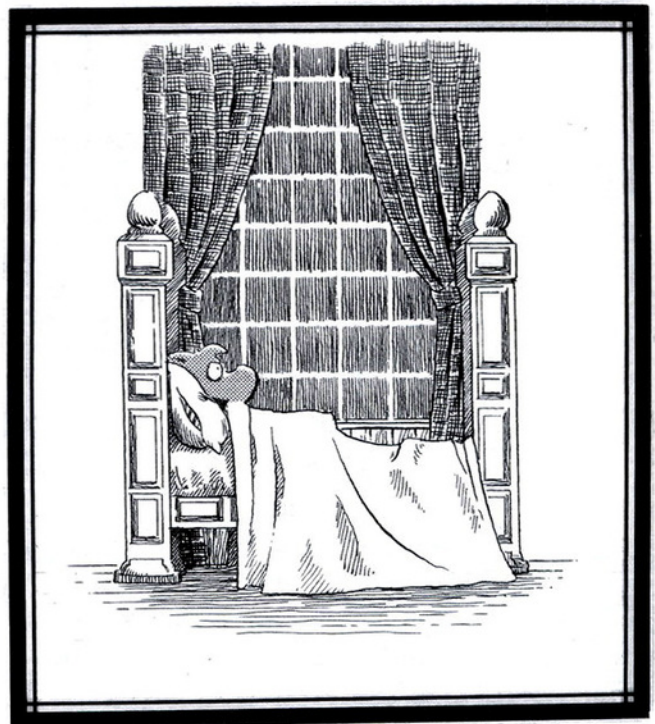
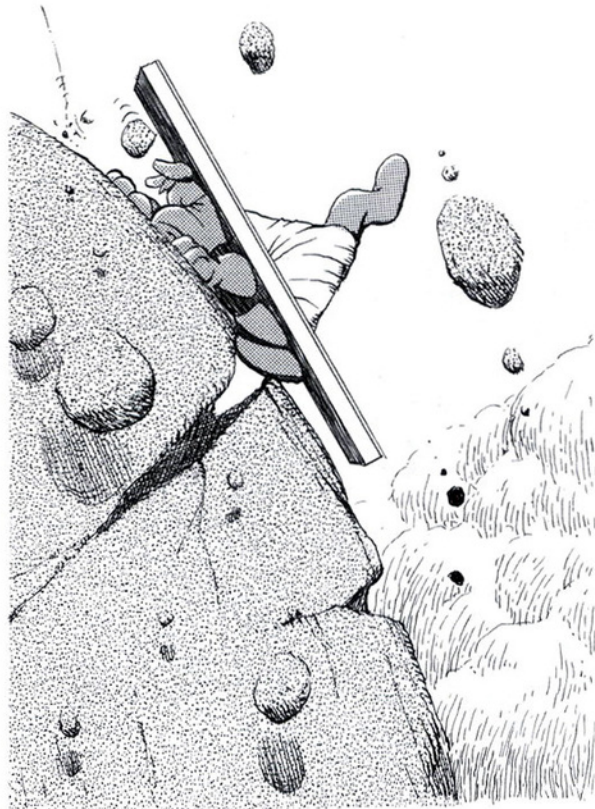
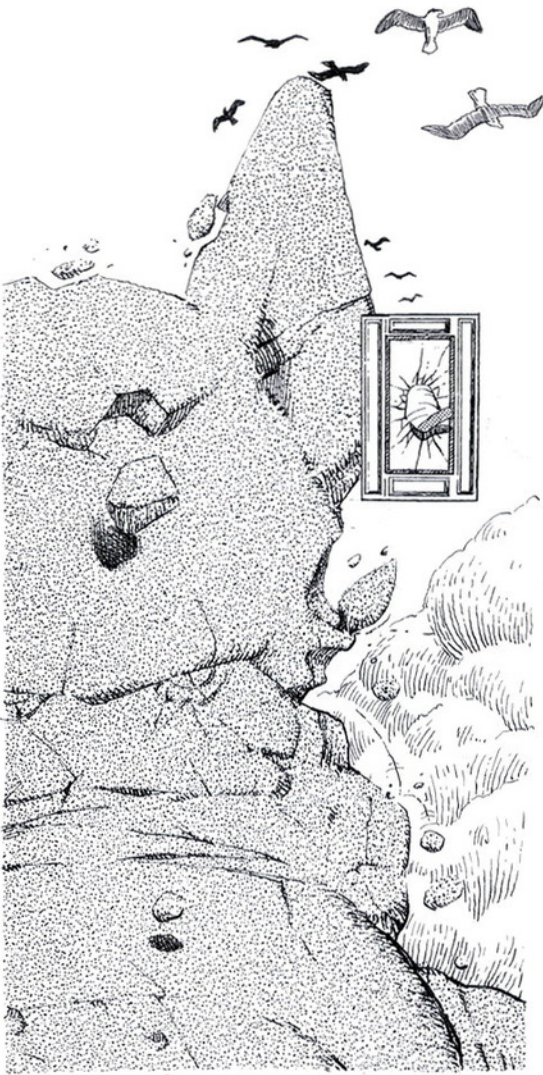
The birds return, still flying in the same direction—the wind currents are still carrying them into the future, it's only Cerebus who is being borne backward tightly wedged within the frame (which has now expanded somewhat, but still not to its former size). Suddenly there's a magnificent palace rising up from the waves while a solid continuous building shimmers like a mirage behind it. To the left of the palace, a giant statue of Cerebus, vaguely popelike but lacking in detail and (most significantly!) appendages hovers above the waves, which are getting turbulent again. Cerebus appears not to be heading for either one, but into a space directly between the two.

Page Four

In a scene reminiscent of his earlier attempt to seize the crown, he seems to be carried in the direction of the statue, although it also seems to be an open question as to whether he is going to be able to reach it or be blown past it as had happened with the crown. As he approaches the statue, however, it begins to crumble, and the frame he's wedged into begins to diminish in size again. He reaches out for the statue, but it's not clear why. It's not like the crown: it's too big to be taken hold of, and the crumbling fragments look perilous. He reaches out for the statue, which continues to crumble, fringing fragments threateningly in proximity to him even as the frame, diminishing in size again, continues to push him forward against the statue itself. And he wakes up.

What I was foreshadowing at the time: Cerebus was the Pope at the time, and he would be the Pope again, but in such a way that he would have more in common with an idol (his role at The Great Cerebus

(continued on page 35)

CEREBUS DREAMS
II

(continued from page 30)
in the Book of Ricke and in *Latter Days* and *The Last Day)* than as the head of the united church. His choice to acquiesce to being The Great Cerebus promised in the Booke of Ricke would create the illusion of greater power than he has—the crown he hasn't been able to grasp as Most Holy—but it will actually be more narrowly confining, and he would be almost literally crushed between who he actually is and who he will be perceived to be and the dynamic meeting place between himself as a virtual idol and who he actually is would cause his iconic statue to crumble, literally crushing him personally against it.

What I think I was saying unconsciously that I wasn't aware of at the time: The Cerebus wedged into the frame is a kind of picture, partway between a pictorial representation of a Pope and an actual Pope (in that he's both: he's "actually" wedged in there in the context of the story, and he's actually just "lines on paper"), which constitutes a kind of heresy against the Catholic Church but not necessarily idolatry. You can have a picture of a fictional Pope without worshipping it. The statue represents another level of extremity of the same metaphorical question. It's not an actual statue, it's a picture of a statue. And again, you can have a statue that is just a statue, presumably, if you don't worship it. The worship of a statue is what makes it genuine idolatry. But, in the context of the story, I'm bringing the two into the closest proximity to each other possible and seem to be suggesting that the closer that I move the pictorial representation to the genuine idol, the more it will be to the genuine detriment of the idol: basically bringing about the idol's destruction.

I think that might have been very interesting in certain quarters at the time, coming as it did from a complete atheist up to his eyeballs in sin since I obviously had no conscious awareness of what I was actually talking about.

(Roberta Gregory continued from page 15)
intimidated by the feminists that you could never be out of the professional rat race for five minutes before you would be clamouring to be back in even though the rat race has always and will always make you miserable. So, I think you need to find some nice squishy, feminist guy that you can intimidate into supporting you as you unhappily careen through the job market like a pinball for the next few decades. And that's not—and never will be—me."

And, of course, ultimately, I realized that it was wrong of me to continue to get involved in these situations for the sake of getting laid regularly and for all of the happy companionable aspects that go into having a girlfriend. Even if I found someone who actually worked to be a wife and mother, my experience with the gender was that nothing they want to be today is carved in stone. Far from it and, by the day, further from it all the time. The 180-degree turn was and is far more the norm than the exception with post-1970 women and—given that they have restructured family law so that they are entitled to completely transform themselves while still being entitled to their half of the material assents whatever they choose to transform themselves into (you can marry a cheerful and dutiful wife and mother and end up being divorced by workaholic short-tempered lesbian: "with all my worldly goods do thee endow" finds the bait-and-switch contrast legally irrelevant).

Still, it's always interesting to get into these "compare and contrast" discussions, and I thank Roberta again for her strip.

(continued from inside front cover)
Dave notes, "What I was *trying* to do was 'think' a BWS piece that BWS would *see* as a BWS piece at a time when I wasn't even close to having the drawing 'chops' to pull it off on my own." As for the cryptic note, he adds, "If we really want to get into levels of meaning, it can also be read as, 'To Bury, Go Nuts!' That is, to bury that which needs to be buried (i.e. that which is dead), you first need to go nuts. An arduous course to take in life, but one that both Barry and I apparently opted for (however unconsciously). In bedazzled retrospect? Yeah, I can see that. I couldn't have buried everything that needed burying without going more than a little nuts—at least as most people would see it—for an extended period.

"An arresting notion/assertion that, of course, leads the addressed to query Why? (Y)

"And then I skip from explanation to reassurance (always a perilous business to fall for): Why? UH--Are (R) *FRIEND* Dave! (spoken like a true troglodyte through glittering teeth).

"Which would resonate nicely with the recoiling psyche of the one addressed (Why OUR friend Dave?)."

About Last Issue

by ~~Dave Sim~~ Craig

After last issue's publication, which reported on Dave Sim and Neal Adams spending a day at Niagara Falls, I found this interesting item: the first issue of *True Comics and Adventure Stories* (1965) featuring a comic book story of Charles Blondin's walk across the Falls. This is the only such adaptation I'm aware of, though it wouldn't surprise me if others exist. This story has no art credits.

Mind Games

Write to us at:
Following Cerebus
2904 Gene Lane
Arlington, TX 76010

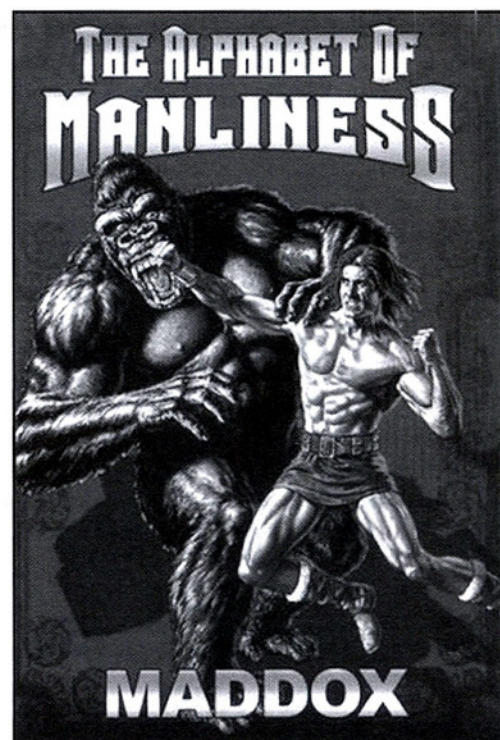
e-mail:
editors@followingcerebus.com

Hi Craig,

My next Cerebite strip is a full page one. I hope that's okay.

One quick comment I wanted to make after the first quick reading of the main Mind Games piece in *FC* 8: I think the person to whom Dave was referring, the person whom Cerebus was "driving crazy" by staying in one place for so long [page 196 of *Rick's Story*] was Gerhard. Hence all the drawing tools, and schematics of the bar, and letting Gerhard express his frustration by drawing all the axes and guns and exit signs dancing behind Cerebus's back.

Hey, just thought I'd mention: a few of my illustrations appear in T*he Alphabet of Manliness*, a humor book by internet sensation "Maddox." The book has made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list the past couple weeks! Anyway, it's about the only other interesting thing I've been involved in (outside of appearing in *Following Cerebus*), so I thought you might like to hear about it.

Bryan Douglas
e-mail

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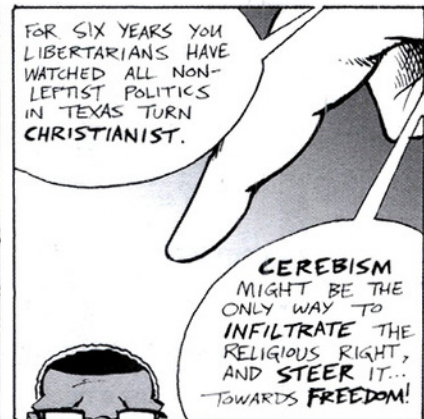
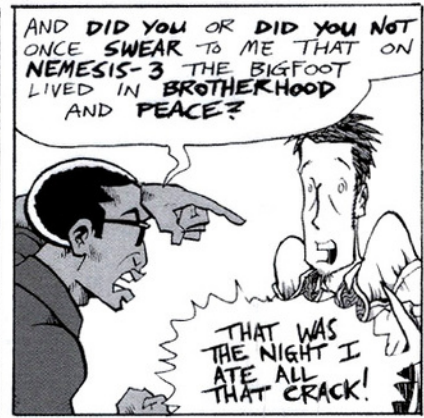
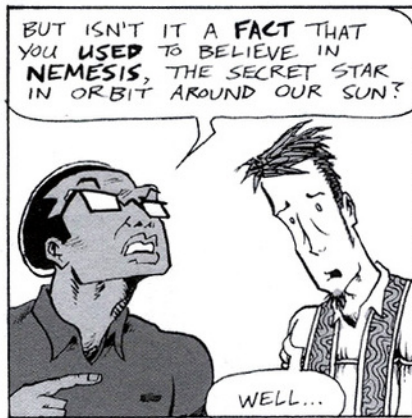
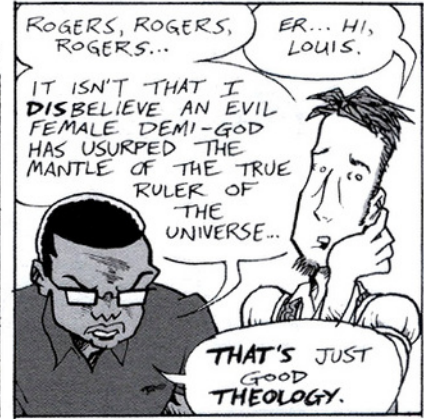
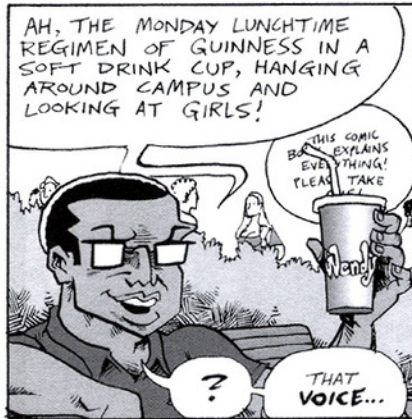

Dave Sim's Favorite Buffy Pic This Month

SMG with Marc Blucas from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* season 4 © Twentieth Century Fox

This is just a nearly impossibly sweet-looking photo of Sara Michelle Gellar. And I mean "sweet" in its original sense, rather than the sense that it tends to be used today (i.e. anything from a sports car to a well-executed scam). If you just happen across a girl who looks like this on a downtown street or a university campus or a store, it instantly elevates the tenor of your day and makes whatever else you have to endure in life worth enduring without complaint. Her hair is beautifully clean (probably a tailor-made and hideously expensive shampoo and equally tailor-made and hideously expensive conditioner and brushed a hundred strokes every night). It absolutely glows in the dark, falling perfectly to frame a very flattering profile. The blouse suits her, in my view, very simple, not too tight, not too loose, no extraneous detail. Same thing with the skirt. Flattering to her figure but not sleazy. And her features, as a result, have that "fine" quality that, for girls, only comes when everything else is working to their satisfaction. Just checked in on an extreme enlargement, and it's even later and more so. The single wisp crossing in front of her eye at just the right angle.

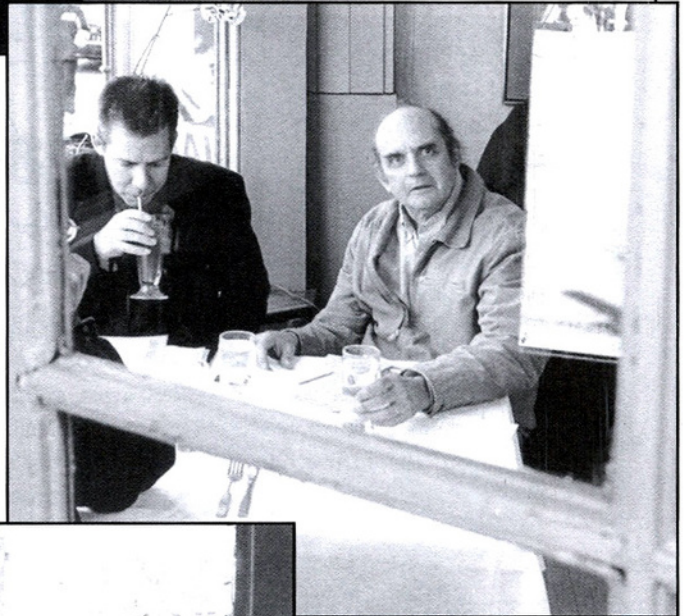
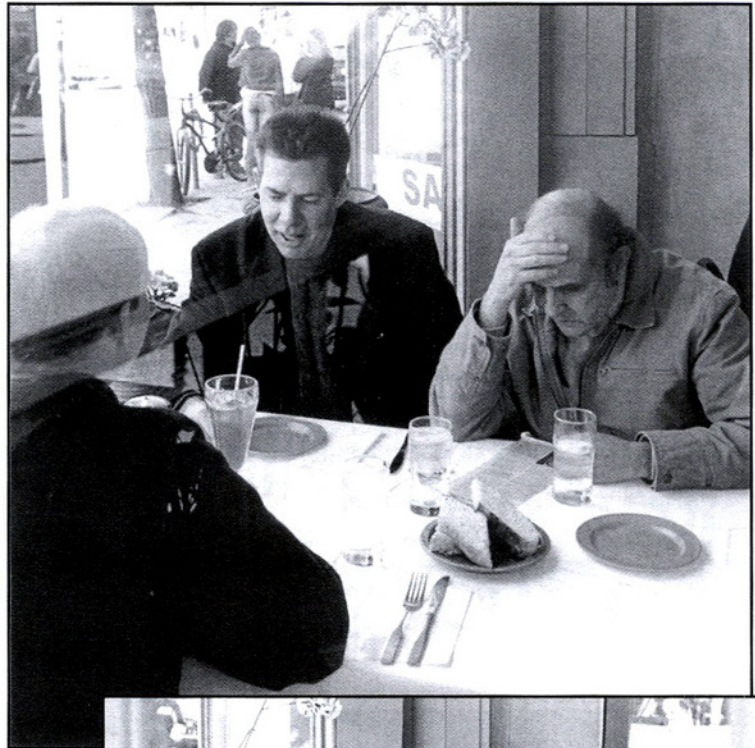
Another Thing Coming

NEWS & MORE

By Dave Sim

Lunch at Peter Pan

Everyone's going to get sick of these photos that Dave Fisher took of me and Chester Brown and Harvey Pekar having lunch at Peter Pan on Queen Street West in Toronto. I've used them here for reference since I had never tried doing my Mort Drucker style from photos, and these were the most recent shots of myself from various angles. I've also used the same photos for the cover of *Collected Letters 2* and (the original objective) for an *American Splendor* cover I did on spec and which Harvey tried unsuccessfully to pitch to DC Vertigo (his current publisher). Harvey has given me permission to print the on-spec cover in a future issue of *Following Cerebus*, which I hope will accompany a transcript of a panel I did with Harvey and Jim Woodring in New York last year, as well as a Pekar introduction to Chester's *Ed the Happy Clown* that Chester illustrated. I think I might even to another *American Splendor* cover or two for *Following Cerebus*, since the photographes came out so well, and it's a chame to let them go to waste. Chester liked one of Dave's photos of him so much that he's going to use it as the jacket photo on his next book!

I have no idea how Harvey's *American Splendor* is *selling* for Vertigo, but I really enjoyed issue 2 (haven't found issue 1 yet) with Richard Corben and Eddie

Seated at left (clockwise from left): Chester Brown, Dave Sim, Harvey Pekar

Campbell's strips. Check it out!

Art for Howard Shum Film

Comic book panels, formatted to movie screen size, used in Howard "Gun Fu" Shum's debut film, *The Secret Life of Comic Book Artists*. It's a dream sequence (fitting right in with this issue's theme) that involves Howard's character, a comic-book artist, and Natasha, a female comic-book artist, going to a shopping mall, where she encounters a strange man from the future who is one of Howard's character's biggest fans. I pencilled the illustrations from photos supplied by Howard, and Howard inked the pages himself. I thought he did a great job. He's presently shopping the film to various film festivals.